Foosball for Fun and Profit (Page 28)

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THE North American Review

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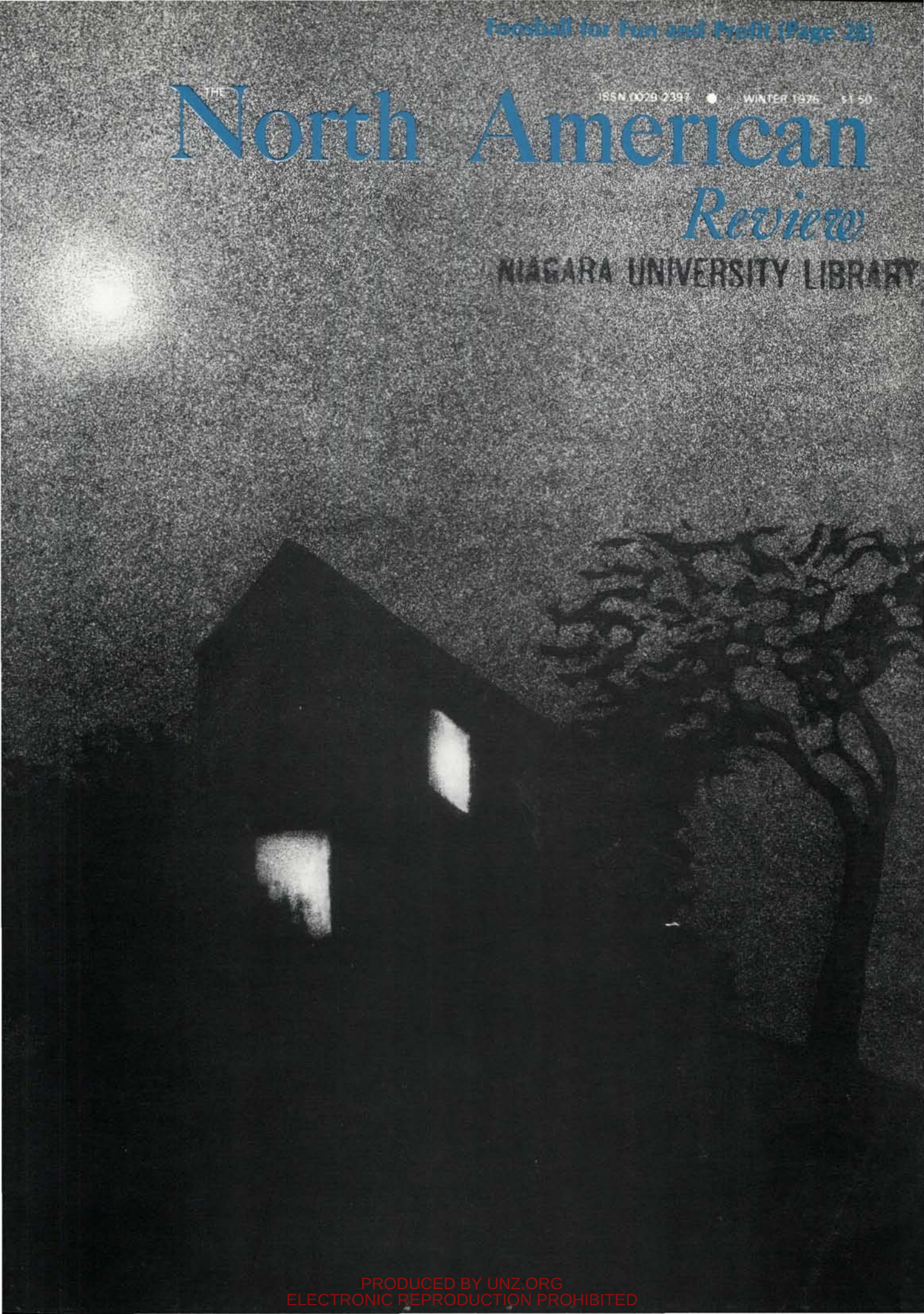

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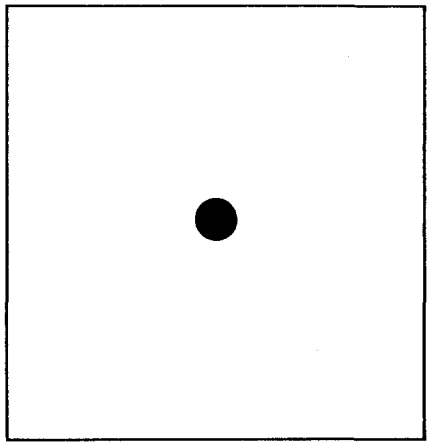
A blood clot the size of this dot can cause a Heart Attack.



Or a stroke.

Every year, thousands die because of a blood clot. Thousands more become disabled, some permanently.

What's being done to stop it.

Plenty.

We're the American Heart Association. We're giving scientists the chance to find out more about blood clots.

How to detect them. How to treat them. How to keep them from happening.

We're fighting hard. With new drugs. New kinds of treatment. Better ways to help heart attack and stroke victims return to a normal life.

And it's only a part of the total war we're waging against the number one cause of death in this country: heart disease and stroke.

But we can't fight without your money. When the Heart Association volunteer asks for your dollars, be generous.

The blood clot is small, the problem is enormous.

Please give generously to the American Heart Association

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE

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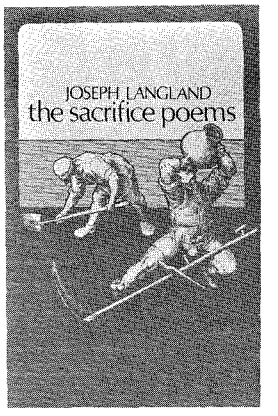

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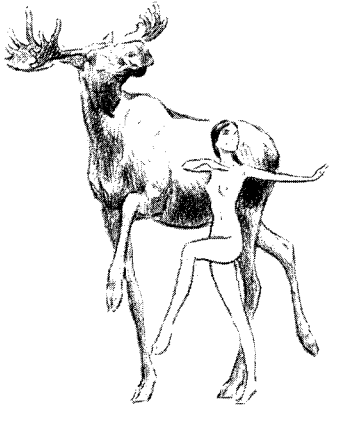

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The NAR has received a grant of one thousand dollars from the Coordinating Council for Literary Magazines. This amount, matched by our parent University of Northern Iowa, is to be used to assist in payments to authors.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

We'd not have sent our man in the north, Leo Hertzel, into the harm's way of a tavern sport, except for the assurance that the sport was on its way to respectability. His chronicle of the aspirations of foosball—or table soccer, as class would have it—begins on page 28; the reader may draw his own conclusions about whether foosball will shortly compete with tennis in the hearts of us all. For ourselves, we can only confess to the slowest wrists west of the Mississippi, and small children have scored on us at will.

Another year has ended, with all the reliefs attendant upon completions—another presidential election behind us (and another seige of misgiving rampant upon the land), the bicentennial folderol concluded, and the NAR's annual index compiled for the libraries. The statistics: 27 short stories in 1976, written by 25 different authors—20 of them new to the NAR—and 42 poems by 39 poets, 21 of them new faces in these pages. Huzzah; bring on 1977.

Some books, recent or upcoming, by contributors to the NAR: Vance Bourjaily's *Now Playing at Canterbury* (Dial); Frederick Busch's *Domestic Particulars* (New Directions); Vine Deloria, Jr.'s *Planetary Man* (Harper & Row); Stephen Dixon's *No Relief* (Street Fiction); Stephen Dobyns's *Griffon* (Atheneum); Norman Dubie's *The Illustrations* (Braziller); Russell Edson's *The Intuitive Journey and Other Works* (Harper & Row); Robert Fox's *Destiny News* (December); Thomas Glynn's *Temporary Sanity* (Braziller); Albert Goldbarth's *Coming Back* (Doubleday); George V. Higgins's *The Judgment of Deke Hunter* (Little, Brown); Alyce Ingram's *Blue Horses* (Vagabond); Philip Levine's *The Names of the Lost* (Atheneum); Joyce Carol Oates's *Childworld* (Vanguard); Lucien Stryk's *Selected Poems* (Swallow); James Tate's *Viper Jazz* (Wesleyan); Richard Yates's *The Easter Parade* (Delacorte).

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Joyce T. Macrorie

A Gift from Xipelotec

We were living in Oaxaca, Mexico, in a rented house—two daughters sprung from their schools but studying, a husband on a sabbatical writing leave from his university, and an artist without studio. My 2,000-pound etching press was home in Michigan.

I drew. I tried a few woodcuts. I read. I knitted while I read, knowing we already owned enough sweaters. I shopped in the spirit of people who drink. Leisure overflowed on me.

I had brought two bequeathed diamond rings with me to have made into earrings. American friends recommended the jeweler Jorge Garcia Mendez. "You'll have to wait, but when he does a job he does it right. His only problem is too many customers. If he tells you a week, plan on four."

I had expected a prosperous store. Jorge's shop was a converted gatekeeper's room guarding the entrance to an old house wedged between commercial buildings. *Don* Jorge stood behind a scarred glass counter, a fortyish man chatting with another, elbows plunked, body bent in a pose suggesting he had all day.

"Good afternoon," he said, smiling near-sightedly. Both men looked at me and waited. I stammered through Spanish, encouraged by both men supplying gestures. The *maestro* made a sketch, measured the stones, and gave me a receipt. "They will be ready next Friday," he said surely.

The Monday after the next Friday I went to see *Señor* Garcia Mendez. I thought I'd nudge him. "Are my earrings ready?"

"How not?" he said haughtily. "I promised Friday, didn't I? And here it is, um," he peeked over his shoulder at the wall calendar, "Here it is Monday." He tucked his chin in so his face flattened, then smiled radiantly. Opening a drawer in his work table, he pawed squirrel-fashion through small boxes, tissue-paper scraps, and bulging envelopes with notations on the outside. He stuck a divining finger down in the middle and extracted a tissued lump. Turning his lips in toward his teeth and pinching the package gently, he said, "Ah, *si*," and opened the paper to reveal the completed earrings.

I held each one up reverently, examining the workmanship. He put both hands on the counter, flat, and rocked back and forth, beaming as he watched. I heard myself blurting, "Could I work for you as an apprentice? I've made jewelry before but most of it was simple or cast." I held up my seal ring, one of two I had made for my husband and me when we got married.

"You want to work in this *taller*?"

I nodded.

"Well." He paused, his head bobbing heavily while he thought. "Once an American *señorita* worked in another shop here in town."

That takes care of tradition, I thought. But no.

"All she wanted was to spend a week or two learning typical filigree. She was a fine jeweler."

No good, I thought, sagging.

He paused again, looking at his hands, the counter top, sideways at me. Then he lifted his shoulders, smiled into my face, and said, "*Cómo no*?"—Why not?" We shook hands on six hours a day, five days a week, for a year.

* * *

The next morning I arrived at a boarded-up shop. I stood in the pale sun shivering, nervous. Soon a boy unlocked the side door and went in. I heard sweeping and humming. I opened the door quietly. Black dust swirled and resettled on the boy and benches as he flicked a bunch of feathers three inches above all the surfaces. "I'm the new apprentice," I said.

He stopped flicking and looked me over. "Come in." He went on cleaning. When he finished, he sat down at one of the benches, pulled out a drawer, and began working, whistling.

I went outside.

Soon another young man arrived on a bike. He wheeled it carefully past me into the hall and entered the studio.

The sun warmed up, traffic increased, people filed in and out of the bakery across the street buying bags full of good smells. I thought about another cup of coffee, of going home and forgetting this nonsense. Then Jorge arrived, breathless, scurrying up with a black doctor's bag in one hand, the other outstretched to shake mine. "Oh, I'm late on your first day. *Que lástima*. Forgive me. Come in, come in."

He introduced me to Felipe and Pablo who each shook my hand and smiled widely as though seeing me for the first time. Then we set to work. "We will share this first project, you understand? That way I can show you how we use the equipment and you can show me how much you already know." Jorge said this confidently, ready to be impressed with the quality of my craftsmanship. Sweat ran down the inside of my arms.

We started three gold rings set with jade. In less than two days we had them finished. In that short time I convinced *Don* Jorge of my sincerity, my diligence, and my lack of experience. He bought silver for me to learn on.

Within a week I realized that the *maestro* had been very early the first day, not late. It was his custom to arrive around eleven, after everybody else had been there two hours. He always came in breathless, acting late even though it was his more-or-less regular time. Partly he felt harried from searching out parking for his burden and pride—an old Plymouth. Partly, it was his self-image to be rushed, always a step behind, a minute off, a date removed. He made up for it with charm. As he entered, he grinned at us, rolled his eyes heavenward, implying that we should be glad he had made it.

* * *

The second week *Don* Jorge came in carrying a clean, folded muslin towel. He looked disgustedly at the several

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grimy shop towels and said, "This is for you," shaking his finger in the Mexican gesture that serves all negating purposes. Wag-wag, "Don't thank me, it isn't right for you to use the dirty towels we men use," and wag-wag, "Don't let those guys use it." Every day I took it home to wash so he could see I knew how to accept an honor.

A few days after the towel gift he puffed in at 11:30, put his jewelry out, started working, and then said, "Soap!" From his sweater pocket he took a small bar of hand soap wrapped in a picture of palm trees around a lagoon. Printed over the inevitable full moon was "California Night." Imported. Ceremoniously he put it on my bench top. The rest of the shop used detergent out of a plastic bag nailed to the wall. It did a better job but detergent was common and I, evidently, was a lady.

My Spanish prohibited full technical explanations from *Don* Jorge. Instead, he gave lucid demonstrations and waited for me to understand the reasons after the logic had come clear in the work. Starting me on my first filigree chain after the jade rings, he showed me how to measure and cut small pieces of wire. "Put them against the thumb nail like this," tap, tap, "and then hang on to that end tight while you cut. Be sure you hang on tight and get them exactly the same," he said.

It was difficult to make them the same length, and a few fell short; but I used them anyway. As the bending and curling progressed, the slight variations increased geometrically. I spent hours trying to create filigree squiggles perfectly alike after starting with unalikes. Next time I held very tightly and made them exactly the same.

At Christmas time I worried about presents for the men—something small so as not to embarrass them, not too personal but appropriate. I asked a friend coming from the States to bring a red sweatshirt for Felipe. After ridiculous agonizing I settled on shaving lotion for Pablo and for *Don* Jorge a bottle of liquor. The most pedestrian, obvious, therefore safe, choices. I wrapped them the day before Christmas Eve and took them to the shop the next morning. When I arrived, Pablo and Felipe were both working heads down. I put the packages on their desks, over to one side, not saying anything. They didn't say anything either. I stuck *Don* Jorge's bottle beside his chair on the floor where he would see it but customers wouldn't.

"What's this?" Jorge asked when he came in. He shook the bottle.

"It's from the *Señora*," Pablo said.

"Ahhhhh," said *Don* Jorge, putting it in his black bag.

My initial surprise that we should work on Christmas Eve evaporated in the heat of that frantic day. Last minute sales, jewelry engravings that couldn't wait, and sweaty rushing in and out to the bank for gold—run, Felipe, to Mrs. Cohen with this cross. I sat in my corner, working slowly on silver, feeling out of pace with the rest of the gold-buying city.

Finally the 2:30 news came on the radio. We started putting things away for dinner and *siesta* hours. *Don* Jorge stuck his head into the work-shop from out front and shook his finger at me.

"Don't leave yet," he ordered.

Pablo and Felipe smirked while they put the files in the rack, picked litter from the floor in unusual tidiness. I rearranged my already neat bench drawer and played with the habitual studio litter on top. Again *Don* Jorge stuck his head into the work-shop, this time trying to be dignified but succeeding only in looking embarrassed. He cleared his throat and began. "*Señora Hoysay* (Joyce). . ." He stopped. He looked at Pablo and Felipe, who turned away smiling. "This. . ." He stopped again. Then firmly he said, "*Señora Hoysay*, this present is from Pablo, Felipe, and me. *Feliz Navidad*." He put a tiny package down in the litter.

Now I was embarrassed, realizing it was partly the need to respond to my gifts that had blown the shop into a spatter of activity. I couldn't think how to say they shouldn't have done it. I realized almost immediately that wasn't right anyway. According to their custom they should have. So I thanked them and left, taking my unopened gift and red face out into the three o'clock sun.

Christmas morning I opened the present from the *taller*, reading aloud the hand-lettered card splendid with *Don* Jorge's engraving script. Inside, lying on a cotton bed, was the god of jewelers—Xipelotec—duplicated from the original Monte Alban Tomb Number Seven jewel. Nose ring, ear and chin bells dangling, the tiny face looked at me from a filigree pin bar. The entire piece was exquisitely done in eighteen karat gold. I held it up for everyone to see, my chin wobbling, tears filling my eyes.

"Oooooh," Karin said admiringly. Then looking at my face, she asked, "What's wrong, don't you like it?"

"Karin, she loves it, can't you tell that?" Lisa said.

"Well, said Ken, "this just shows what they think of you down at the shop. And you're always talking about being in their way and getting on their nerves."

Wiping my nose I said, "This just shows that we should be careful about giving gifts to Mexicans—they reciprocate so hard."

In January I myself completed six silver Xipelotec faces for the shop and was feeling smug if not original. Karin came down to buy one and walk me home for dinner. On the way she told me, a propos of nothing, that she bet Jorge had let me apprentice because he couldn't say no.

"Why do you say that?" I asked, hurt.

"Well, when I ask Teresa (our housekeeper) what kind of pop she wants, she always says she doesn't care. And when I give her grape she says 'thank you' but she doesn't drink it. I don't give it to her any more. But she's never told me she didn't like grape."

"I don't see what that has to do with Jorge," I said.

"Mo-om—it's the same as when you ask a Mexican how to get someplace. They always tell you where to go even when they don't know, just so they won't make you feel bad."

I knew exactly what she was talking about.

* * *

About the time I wore out the California Night soap and started washing up with detergent, Jorge realized I wasn't going to discourage. He bought a small bellows, torch, and gasoline bottle for me alone. Hooking it to my bench, he said, "A friend of mine has women working for him. He says the big bellows hurt their legs. This small one is better for you." I wasn't fooled. I knew the small torch would keep me off the big one where my slowness had sometimes queued up all three men.

With me fixed to my bench, the nine-by-twelve shop was as tightly fitted as a travel kit: two double work benches, a table, the buffing machine, torch, water and acid baths, a stump sprouting anvils, and right in the middle—its handles sticking out wickedly—the decrepit rolling mill where flat stock and wire were made. Two doors opened into the room, one from the hall and the other from the store where Jorge's bench and display case held in their stomachs to let the store front fold open and shut. We were crowded, but I was part of the kit.

In the big glass display case Jorge kept gold jewelry for sale, dusty leather watch bands, odds and ends of string, and all of the previous years' receipt books. The top shelf alone maintained a

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semblance of display. Sunk in the wall behind the big show case was another glass-fronted box about the size of a bathroom cabinet. It was full of scrap paper Jorge hoarded for sketches and estimates. Just before Christmas he had bought red construction paper and announced he was going to decorate. Business turned frantic and nothing happened.

The first part of February Jorge got sail up for the Christmas project. He emptied the glass cabinet of its nesting materials, papered the back, rigged up a wire, and hung or pinned my silver jewelry against the dark red. We all went out on the sidewalk to look at the effect. Pablo and Felipe wall-eyed the display, smoking and smacking each other while they wondered, I'm sure, what new and startling thing Jorge would do next. First a woman apprentice and now decorating. Jorge picked up the junk from the cabinet, looked distractedly for some place to put it, and stuffed it in with the receipt books on the bottom shelf of the big case.

* * *

In the fiber-board partition dividing the showroom from the workroom, Jorge had drilled numerous peep-holes at different heights. They weren't big enough to be noticed from out front but through them we could see who was tapping the counter or shuffling quietly, waiting. In the months I worked, I never figured out the criterion for who was kept waiting long, longer, longest. It didn't depend on money. Some starchy Oaxaca matrons waiting patiently for the *maestro* might have been dismayed had they known he was buffing a cross for an Indian who wouldn't be back until next week's market day.

Jorge muttered, "I'm coming," and went on buffing or showing me how to bend the shapes for a Spanish chain. Lacquered fingernails out front tattoed, I shook, and Jorge calmly whispered, "Now you do it." My bent wire took on tortured angles and Jorge sweetly showed me again, never understanding that North American sensibilities can't ignore people who want to do business.

The inside of the workshop was dark, the walls blackened by smoke and soot. Often the acid fumes made us cough until we opened the hall door. Then the draft extinguished my starter lamp and I couldn't solder until the air had cleared enough to shut the door. Most of our dirt and dinge came from the tiny coal-oil starter lamps and inefficiently burning gasoline torches. Delicate, barely visible smoke from our collective fires curled up to patina the walls eight hours daily, six days a week. We worked under sixty-watt overhead bulbs hanging like yellow fruit from the black reaches of the ceiling. We squinted and rubbed our eyes, stepped outside to stare at the building across the street or at the blue slit of the sky. The work was hard on everyone's eyes, but Jorge's nearsighted pair was the most shopworn.

* * *

One day Jorge decided to teach me Oaxaca-style lost wax casting. He built a charcoal fire in the studio's portable brazier. When the heat was steady and fierce we poked the tin-can flasks cozily under a red glowing blanket and watched as the first trickle of wax hit the coals.

After an hour, waxy smoke fuming out of the cans began to make us dizzy. Jorge set the brazier in the hall where a draft from the street door to our neighbor's patio made short work of the burn-out. Each time we checked the cans we pretended not to notice our neighbor and her maid standing in the pall on their balcony, staring angrily down at us. Until the last time.

When Jorge decided the flasks were ready to pour full of gold, he stood straight, swiveled his torso toward the balcony and bowed. "Good morning, *Señorita*, lovely morning, Your health is good?"

"What? Oh yes, thank you, *Don* Jorge," she replied, bowing and putting her hand to her hair. Jorge bowed again, hooked a translucent orange-hot can out of the fire on the tip of the caster and carried it with dignity into the *taller*.

In March Felipe announced that he was leaving for a truck-driving job with his cousin. When, unbelieving, I asked why, he said, "I don't want to go blind," and his eyes filled with tears. He drove truck for three weeks and then came back, grinning and twisting in embarrassed pleasure at our welcome.

Most days Jorge didn't have trouble but sometimes he hesitated before a medal to be engraved, took off his glasses, rubbed his eyes, and put the work away, sighing. He engraved all the sales for a large shop owned by *Señora* Cohen, from whom he also bought metal and stones. Sometimes she came over to chide him about an order. "*Don* Jorge, *Señor* Mortadela has been waiting for two weeks. He's in the shop now and he's angry. Maybe I better take it back to him, heh? I'll wait here while you do it." She was imperious, rich, and dependent on Jorge's superior craftsmanship to maintain her edge on the competition.

Jorge sighed again, fumbled in the litter for the bracelet, heated up the lacquer stick, and sharpened his tools. Then with Mrs. Cohen watching—her breath sucked in and held so as not to disturb the genius—Jorge commenced. He printed the name and date on a scrap of paper, studied it with his lips held between his teeth in speculative position; and digging the tool directly into the metal, he began the first serif of what would be a perfect italic inscription.

A single earring came in for duplication. For three months it sat on Pablo's bench with the files and clippers. One day Jorge picked it out and said, "I have to make this right away. The owner goes to Mexico City tomorrow and she wants to take it with her." With that, he began melting gold and when I left two hours later he was fitting the tricky hinge that distinguished this design from any other I had seen.

"That's such a handsome earring," I said, "why don't we make some more for the shop?"

"Oh, I don't think so for this shop," Jorge said. "This design is typical of Mexico City, not Oaxaca."

And that was the end of it, I knew.

* * *

As the spring progressed, I outfitted myself with the necessary hand tools for a small one-woman shop. I also splurged on a new version of Jorge's ancient wire-forming mill, and he made me an impossibly dangerous whirlygig caster like his. Jorge approved each purchase, aiming me away from the tacky, suggesting money-savers.

In July he began giving me formulas, whatever he thought of—ratio of sulphuric acid to water for cleaning metal; how to make sterling and solder from fine silver; how to make karat and colored golds from pure gold; what to use for gold plating. He was cutting me loose.

In late July he came in at 10:30 one morning. Unheard of hour. "I think you should buy some silver, maybe, so you can get started right away when you get home. I don't think suppliers can be trusted to hurry." This from one of Oaxaca's most unhurried men. "Come."

We walked to *Doña* Cohen, the dragon, the source.

"I knew you were back there in the shop," she said, pouncing on my hand. "I've known it all year. Well, did you learn anything?" Without pausing she turned to Jorge. "Is she any good at all?"

"She is good enough to do her own business. You see"—he leaned confidentially on the counter—"she was an artist to begin with, a *professora*! Yes!"

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he said, to her raised eyebrows. "She will make her own designs now, not mine."

Mrs. Cohen took that in easily, then turned to me. "Is he any good as a teacher?"

"He's mean," I said, rolling Little Eva eyes. "He beat me without stopping—and for nothing!"

She blinked, jaw askew. Then she began laughing. "Wonderful! And now you know everything. 'Beat me without stopping,' Oh, that's comical." While she measured lumps of fine silver she laughed to herself and repeated "He's mean," shaking her head and snorting each time she looked at poor Jorge.

* * *

The last week in July I finished the sets of earrings and chains I had worked on for two months. On the last walk home from the shop, I envisioned transforming it. First I would buy a new milling machine, then a casting machine. But nothing could be done. Money was beside the point. Only so much meddling can be endured by proud people.

I settled on buying a graduated array of shiny dapping tools to replace the worn set used every day in the *taller*. I would deliver it to Jorge's home as my family and I started on the way out of town toward the border. That way he would be unable to reciprocate with another gift he couldn't afford to buy.

The *maestro* met us at the door. "Oh, good. I was afraid I hadn't finished in time," he said, as though the meeting had been planned. "Here!" He held out a full-sized soldering outfit complete with leather bellows, brass torch head, and the traditional two-liter peach jar for the gasoline. He had fabricated every part from odds and ends, from junk. It was fit for years of hard use and beautiful enough for a museum.

Jorge rubbed the leather bellows fondly, pinched the inner-tube top to show its toughness. "Here, look—see? I put a *centavo* for the valve handle so you might think of Oaxaca and the *taller* from time to time."

Through my tears I couldn't see the *centavo*. Jorge fumbled for a handkerchief, flipped it out, and just as I reached for it, blew his nose loudly into it and wiped his eyes. We shook hands five or six times, Mexican-fashion, stumbling to the car. "Say goodbye to Pablo and Felipe," I said, "I wish I could have buffed the graduation rings."

"When you come back to Oaxaca there will always be something to buff."

Both of us smiled. It had worked out all around. Once. □

"I really didn't enjoy it."

—Janet Brown, Brookline, MA

"I enjoyed it immensely. There is something of a sensibility akin to Grace Paley's at times. The authority of the prose is extraordinary."

—Arnold Krupat, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville

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"Only thing I objected to was the difficulty I had keeping the haphazardly introduced characters straight. But even here some came out beautifully developed. All in all, I must admit you are a writer of considerable talent."

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Joan Myers Weimer

Magic in Brazil

Sitting on a beach in Rio de Janeiro, you can see that the girl from Ipanema has lost none of her magnetism. Not even that astonishing landscape—crescents of sand separating the sea from the encircling mountains—can long compete for attention with that impossibly perfect body in its string bikini. Most of the other people on the beach seem to be trying to resemble her or attract her attention: the middle-aged women taking determined brisk walks along the water's edge; the boys with their heavily muscled legs and wasp waists playing endless games of soccer; the men doing their "Coopers"—exercises prescribed by some American visitor which involve a lot of arm-flailing and running along the mosaic sidewalks that edge the beach. If it weren't for the parade of sweating men trudging through the sand selling water and fruit juice from heavy barrels slung on their backs, you could forget that most Brazilians have more on their minds than beautiful bodies. It is easy to forget, in fact, almost impossible to believe, as you sit on the beach at Ipanema, that most Brazilians don't have enough to eat; that Brazil is a police state; and that the government stays in power, as the harassed editor of a political magazine told me, through censorship and torture.

During the month I spent in Rio and São Paulo this spring, I kept looking for some connection between the publicized features of Brazilian culture—the string bikinis, macumba, Carnaval, *machismo*—and the political realities newspapers aren't allowed to mention. Many Brazilians are understandably reluctant to discuss with visitors such matters as starvation and repression. Instead, people talk about the "Brazilian miracle" of economic growth since the military seized power in 1964; though a few insist softly, as you talk in the safety of noisy cafes, that the real miracle is that all the poor haven't yet starved to death. It is just this tendency to think in terms of miracles, I concluded, that connects these widely different aspects of life in Brazil.

Certainly things seem to disappear as if by magic. *Favelas*, those slums that used to crowd Rio's hillsides overlooking opulent apartments, have magically vanished into the remote suburbs. People who criticize the government have been known to disappear without a trace. A former government deputy, Marcio Moreira Alves, has written that "governmental decisions are presented as miracles, as if the country were administered by the Wizard of Oz." But like that fraudulent wizard, the government knows it only pretends to have magical powers, and is haunted by fear of real wizards—of the "supernatural power of the opposition," as one Brazilian friend of mine described it.

The opposition, if not superhuman, is certainly numerous, at least potentially. The government has achieved its economic miracle at the expense of the vast majority of Brazilians. Less than a third of them, according to the 1970 census, are "economically active." Of these, only 10% earn more than $100 a month; most try to subsist on less than half of that. And buying power has fallen by one-fourth since the military took over in 1964. Anyone who objects to this economic situation—or to any of the government's practices—is routinely labeled a Communist, a threat to "national security." Although the Brazilian masses have never been politically active, and middle-class dissenters have been murdered, exiled, jailed or intimidated into silence, the military régime believes, or pretends to believe, that it is under constant assault by its enemies. Out of its terror—real or imagined—of the opposition it justifies its rule by terror. The difficulties of living under such absolute power seem to lead many Brazilians to regard others as superhumanly powerful, and to seek absolute, magical powers of their own.

Magical thinking seems to permeate Brazil. It isn't limited to Amazonian Indians whose shamans perform magical cures, or to the illiterate poor who attribute every event in their lives to the intervention of some god or saint. It includes the wealthy woman who has paid a wizard of a plastic surgeon a thousand dollars or more for the appearance of eternal youth so that she can display a miraculously flawless body on the beach. Magical thinking gives any Brazilian male the ability to transform the female half of the human race into mere reflections of male will and desire by invoking the magic of *machismo*. Magical thinking enables any Brazilian woman to reverse the magic of *machismo* through spiritist religious ecstasy; by allowing a spirit, instead of a man, to possess her, she acquires for the moment that spirit's supernatural powers. And men who extract confessions by torturing enemies of the government acquire not only absolute power over the bodies of their victims, but magical control of the truth itself.

The common magical elements in *machismo*, torture, and spiritism does not, of course, explain their complex social, economic and cultural causes. Nor is any of them unique to Brazil. What is strikingly Brazilian, I think, is that three significant institutions have evolved there in ways that accomodate fantasies of personal omnipotence, fantasies designed to combat the fear of being overwhelmed by powerful forces which cannot be managed by rational means.

Neither are the motives or methods wholly magical. The torturer who satisfies his longings for omnipotence is also trying to obtain information from his victim. The mother who seeks from the healer at a spiritual center magical "passes" for her child

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suffering from dysentery is frequently using antibiotics dispensed at a clinic as well. In fact, just such combinations of rationality or science with magic or fantasy are typical of Brazil, where even the widespread admiration for technology often approaches faith in the miraculous.

Although one would ordinarily expect science to drive out demons, their co-existence is not really surprising in a country that has tumbled so precipitously into the age of technology. For while Brazil these days is rapidly gaining control over the environment through technology, it is also experiencing the tensions and insecurity that develop when a traditional society modernizes rapidly. "Under such conditions," writes Nur Yalman, defining "magic" in the *International Encylopedia of the Social Sciences*, "there is an even greater urge to turn to such supernatural weapons and beliefs as are available." So Brazil is currently on its way to acquiring a new "supernatural" weapon—the nuclear bomb—to add to its existing arsenal of defenses against powerlessness.

The country was founded, in fact, by mostly marginal men who came from Portugal to the New World to enact fantasies of personal power. These second sons, soldiers, friars, farmers, artisans had left behind a social code which stressed male honor and hung it on men's ability to prevent their women from disgracing them. In the New World, lacking a small exclusive community to enforce its traditions, this "honor and shame" code evolved into *machismo*, a code which enshrined masculinity as the highest cultural value and defined it as the capacity to impose oneself on others. Its central figure was the *macho*, a mythic hero whose exaggerated masculinity magically defended him against all threats to his dominance. Like all myths, this one was false to facts but true to emotional needs. For men who found themselves in a vast land full of riches and savages, a land which offered the possibilities both of mastery and engulfment, the *machismo* myth expressed both the dream of power and—implicitly—the fear of powerlessness.

The descendants of the conquerors had reasons of their own for needing such a myth. If they were creoles—sons of Europeans born in Brazil—they were nevertheless excluded from high posts in local government, church, or commerce; such eminences were reserved for the European born. Creoles tended, according to Richard Morse, an historian of this period, toward "self-denigration and braggadocio, habits of command and of deference." Mulattoes and mestizos—sons of Indian or African mothers and Eurpean fathers—were even less sure of their worth than creoles. As their fathers' sons, they were entitled to dominate; as their mothers' sons, they were entitled to nothing. Such men, Morse says, were "caught up in fantasies of personal domination and plagued at the same time by fears of [their] own worthlessness."

Political circumstances in Brazil have also perpetuated the tensions that give rise to *machismo* and keep it alive. In his brilliant study of the Mexican character, *Labyrinth of Solitude*, Octavio Paz writes that *machismo* usually appears where wide social differences separate the privileged few from the miserable many; where abuse of authority by the powerful produces skepticism and resignation in the people; where men fear their masters and suspect their equals, and escape from their isolation with outbursts of violence. All these conditions exist in modern Brazil—along with the desire to change such unpleasant realities by inverting them, magically turning fear, impotence and shame into courage, power and pride.

Brazilian family patterns have also tended to perpetuate the magical thinking of *machismo*. A recent study of Brazilian boys from all classes finds that "maternal involvement in children, particularly sons, is extremely intense"; that the overindulged, overprotected, dominated son "begins to fantasize about future exploits; achievement takes on a magical aura in that there appears to be no limit to what he can accomplish"—until childhood ends abruptly with puberty and he finds himself working often at hard menial tasks with no prospects for the glory he had been encouraged to imagine for himself. No prospects but in sex: with women he can still hope to be the conquering male. He can even hope to conquer his own fear of his mother's domination by treating other women with contempt. By denying that women pose any threat, but abusing them nevertheless because women supposedly enjoy that, the *macho* justifies his desire to punish women for the power they exerted over him when he was a powerless child.

* * *

Machismo is less effective in regulating relationships with other men. Since manhood is never proved once and for all, but must constantly be demonstrated and defended against attack, every man is a potential threat to every other man. He might cuckold him, or just call him a cuckold—an accusation which, in the Northeast of Brazil, can lead to gunfire. To be cuckolded is to lose one's absolute authority over one's woman, and manhood rests on one's authority over his inferiors. For the *macho*, sex is still, as it was at the time of the Portuguese conquest, the conquest of the body of an inferior.

Brazilian boys learn this code very young. They are urged into sexual relations with servants or prostitutes as early as possible. A Brazilian friend, a young man from an aristocratic family, told me how his father led his brother by the hand to a familiar prostitute when his brother at fourteen was still sexually uninitiated. Another friend, this one from the Northeast, explained that mothers there often bring a girl from the impoverished interior of Brazil to serve as a concubine for their sons, to be replaced by another when she gets pregnant. The public rationale for this practice is that it protects the virginity of marriageable girls while providing an outlet for youthful virility which might otherwise be diverted into homosexuality. Seen from another point of view, it demonstrates the pervasive Brazilian anxiety about masculinity. Sex is seen as yet another contest, and anxious men prefer contests they cannot lose.

The anxiety appears, too, in the frequent heated accusations that a man is a homosexual—in Brazilian slang, a *bicha*. To curse someone, a Brazilian does not call him a bastard—which would have minimal impact in Brazil, where extra-marital liaisons are common and calmly regarded—but a *bicha*. To taunt their opponents children chant, "Is it a man? No. A woman? No. What is it? *Bicha! Bicha! Bicha!*"

Many Brazilian women insist there is some basis for the accusation. A middle-aged public school supervisor explained to me why one of the women working for her hadn't found a husband: "There are no real men

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around here," she complained, "only homosexuals." A friend who had lived many years in the Northeast reported to me that prostitutes there complain bitterly that their customers want only anal intercourse, but they concede that their business rests on this preference, which men wouldn't impose on their wives.

All this sexual anxiety demands that the *macho* maintain his precarious sense of self by concealing that self behind a mask of irony and self-sufficiency and stripping away the defenses of others. He can protect himself only by exposing and wounding another person. As Paz describes it, "One word sums up the aggressiveness, insensitivity, invulnerability, and other attributes of the *macho*: power...power [which] almost always reveals itself as a capacity for wounding, humiliating, annihilating," for "unforeseen acts that produce confusion, horror and destruction," for "acts of revenge" performed with a "great, sinister laugh." The whole agonized syndrome of *machismo*—the frustrated longing for power, the fears of powerlessness, the fantasies of omnipotence—finds its cruelest expression in the torture chamber.

* * *

Since torture has been institutionalized in Brazil for a decade, unlike random instances of police brutality elsewhere it follows a highly standardized procedure, according to the *Report on Allegations of Torture in Brazil* published by Amnesty International of the U.S.A. in September of 1972. The experience of two victims, a man and a woman, both of whom insist they got off lightly compared with others they know, are thus reasonably representative.

The woman—who cannot be named because she is still living in Brazil—was eighteen years old in 1972 when she was arrested along with 150 other students who were passing out leaflets at her university. Hundreds of students at other universities in Rio were arrested at the same time. All of them apparently received the same treatment, and all were released after one to four weeks of imprisonment and torture. The girl was stripped naked and beaten by five men—resulting in permanent injury to her kidneys, ovaries, and the muscles of her back. She was given electric shock by a man his fellow torturers humorously called "the nurse." Electrodes were placed particularly on her hands and in her vagina. Her uterus was so badly burned that it will probably never retain a foetus. She was threatened with rape. She was confined in an "icebox," a very cold room so small she could only crouch; given electric shock again; told—falsely—that the screams she heard from the next room were those of her younger sister, whereupon she agreed to "confess" and was released eight days later. No formal charges were ever filed against her.

No formal charges were brought against the man, either, but since he was expelled from Brazil last October—though President Geisel had to invoke his powers to suspend the Constitution to do it—his name can be given. In fact, he has been speaking and writing so widely and eloquently about his own case that one listener told him, "The Brazilian government certainly picked the wrong man to torture." Fred B. Morris is an American who lived for most of the last ten years in Brazil, working primarily in Recife as a missionary of the Methodist Church. He was on close terms with Archbishop Helder Câmara, an outspoken and so far untouchable critic of the régime. Probably for his "crime" of associating with this enemy of the government, Fred Morris was imprisoned for seventeen days in October, 1974. For four of those days he was tortured in the standard way—stripped, beaten, deprived of rest, given electric shock. Early in his ordeal, the interrogators—who had begun by kicking him repeatedly in the testicles—tried insult as a form of torture. They alternately accused him of being a homosexual and a rabid woman chaser. The accusation of homosexuality would of course be a violent insult to a *macho;* on the other hand, if Morris were a priestly sort, the otherwise welcome accusation of woman-chasing would be equally offensive. They knew amazingly little about him, either sexually or politically, since they also wanted him to confess either to being a Communist or a CIA agent.

One aspect of Morris's torture shocked the Brazilian military officer who accompanied the U.S. Consul to visit him, Morris later told a House Sub-Committee holding hearings on torture and oppression in Brazil. The Colonel said, "You mean they actually put an electrode on your penis?" Morris commented, "His Latin *machismo* was horrified." But the entire institution of torture in Brazil is rooted in *machismo* and invariably includes an assault on the sexuality of the victim.

To attack the genitals of the victim is to reduce his or her threatening sexual potency, to give the torturer absolute and destructive power over both male and female sexuality. To deprive the victim of clothing is to destroy the crucial mask over the vulnerable self. The entire situation in the torture chamber expresses the anxious narcissism of the *macho*. His fears of engulfment by women, of defeat by men, are assuaged by torture. His own sense of powerlessness is magically redressed by "defeating" an opponent who is helpless to resist, much less to retaliate. His longings for revenge are expressed and sanctioned, for he is acting on orders.

In his relief, he laughs. Victims regularly report hearing, in the intervals of their own screams, the laughter of their tormentors. It seems that the torturer has transformed his victims from human beings like himself into pure objects. How else could he be so entertained by their agony? But Wilhelm Stekel, in his famous study of sadism and masochism, argues that the sadist identifies with his victim in order to experience imaginatively the intense feelings, however painful, of his victim. A man hungry for emotion can thus experience simultaneously the thrills of triumph and defeat, power and subjection. He can laugh at his success in conquering, and at his own contortions in being conquered.

This drama in which the sadist plays both roles is, of course, a substitute for complicated relations with another person who is not wholly under his control, not merely a symbol for himself. Alienation from others is both a cause and an effect of institutionalized torture. A widely-read Brazilian feminist pointed this out to me. "Look," she said, "*machismo* is a form of alienation, and we live in a society where everything contributes to alienation. If you can't accept opposition—sexual or political—if you can't accept interrelationship, you have to deny the reality of the Other."

This denial spreads rapidly from the oppressor to the oppressed. A woman who attended a university in Rio

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during the mid-sixties, when the military often invaded the campus, explained to me that she took care not to know very much about her friends, so that if she was arrested, she couldn't betray them under torture. For the same reason she didn't let anyone know very much about her. Friendships were very casual; no one wanted to care deeply for someone who might be arrested, tortured, or murdered.

* * *

Today's students are, not surprisingly, apathetic. They were children eleven years ago when the military came to power and decreed, as one professor put it, that students were created to study, not to meet—certainly not to think. Like most Brazilians, they have learned that it's not only dangerous to speak out against oppression; it's essentially useless.

And so Brazilians cultivate a wide range of escapes from their fear, helplessness, outrage, or guilt if they benefit from the repression. The most wholesale escape is denial that there is anything to escape from. One wealthy industrialist expressed disbelief that there was any repression in Brazil. An unemployed salesman who admitted that he knew people who had been arrested and tortured insisted they deserved it: "Of course, they were hippies and homosexuals, they took drugs, they were probably terrorists, you can't have people like that around." When I reminded him of the wholesale arrests of students who were handing out leaflets, he said, "What did they do to them, spank them?"

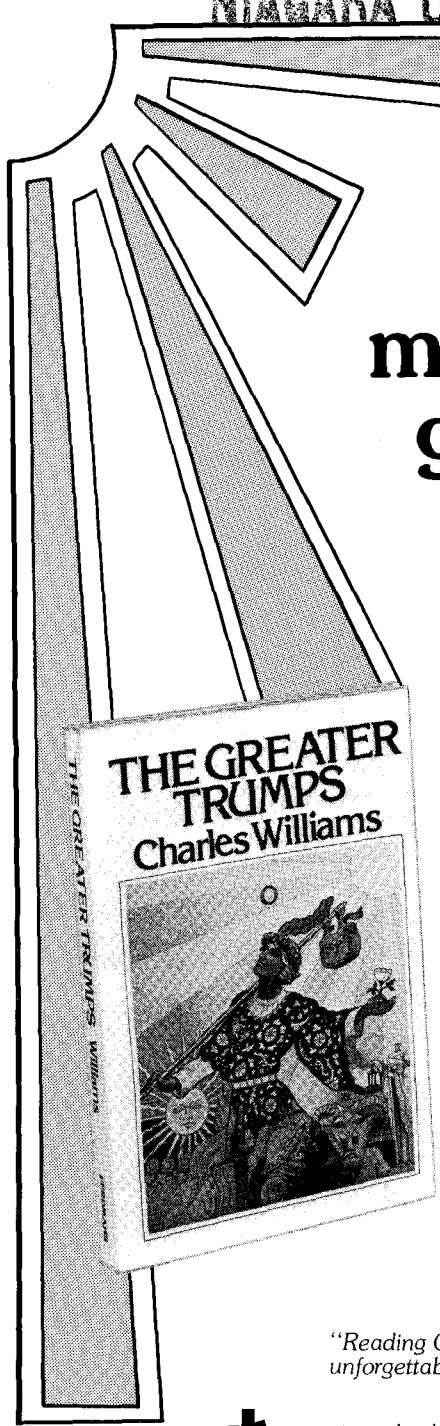
Other Brazilians try to transform reality in more visible ways, most of which are strikingly masochistic. Many of the poor, as one Brazilian noted, "the maids, servants, unskilled laborers, work all year to be able to buy their masquerade costumes for Carnaval, to dress up—as what? As members of the Portuguese court! These descendants of slaves use Carnaval to play the parts of their own conquerors."

Slightly more prosperous Brazilians—cooks, typists, shop clerks—save from their meager salaries to buy the services of the various clinics whose signs are all over Rio. Some offer painfully strenuous gymnastic classes—the one I visited met three days a week at six in the morning; others remove wrinkles by peeling off layers of skin; others remove hair from the entire body except the head. The wealthier can manage more dramatic—and even more painful—transformations in the offices of their psychoanalysts and plastic surgeons. Along with the hope for a more satisfactory self, these institutions offer the escape into pain which is preferable to not feeling anything.

But the most characteristically Brazilian way to escape numbness, isolation, powerlessness is to attend one of the spiritual centers that are flourishing all over the country.

* * *

The spiritualist cults grew, like *machismo*, out of beliefs brought to the New World and modified there to meet new circumstances. But whereas *machismo* grew out of the honor and shame code of the Portuguese conquerors, spiritism developed from the African religions of their slaves. Cut off from their own culture, they drummed and sang to their gods across



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the ocean, who would then come to possess the worshippers and participate in their ceremonies. While retaining African beliefs and practices, the cults became thoroughly Brazilian; even the supernatural beings received Brazilian names, and spoke Portuguese. And the nature of the spirits was modified as well; whereas in Africa the possessing spirits generally embodied the powers of the earth and rivers where they lived, in Brazil they soon came to reflect the patterns of life there. In Belém, at the mouth of the Amazon river, Batuque sects arrange their spirits nowadays in patriarchal families of *caboclos*—carousing lower-class natives—and *senhores*—dignified patricians. Umbanda mediums are sometimes possessed by spirits who used to be native Brazilian Indians (*caboclos*) or wise old African slaves (*prêtos velhos*).

Reflecting too the Brazilian passion for individualism, these sects have retained regional differences: Xangô is practiced in Recife, Candomblé in Salvador, Batuque in Belém, Macumba in Minas Gerais, Guanabara and São Paulo, Umbanda in centers all over Brazil. Each center has distinct practices, reflecting the character of its leader of the moment. But all participants do share a set of common assumptions.

They believe that human beings have relationships with supernatural beings, which may be gods or the spirits of the dead. These spirits want to participate in rituals, and receive offers of food, cigars, and rum. If people with innate spiritual abilities will beckon to these spirits with ritual songs and dances, and then allow the spirits to possess them, the spirits will reward the mediums by helping them solve problems for themselves and their clients: curing emotional and physical diseases, finding work or money, reconciling with lovers. If the mediums neglect the proper rituals and offerings, their spirits may punish them by throwing them violently to the floor, or bringing sickness or trouble to them or members of their families. But for this risk, and the money and time sacrificed to the center, there are compensations. Mediums receive money and prestige for treating clients. They play major roles in public ceremonies. Best of all, in these rituals they can act out otherwise unattainable or forbidden roles free of guilt or anxiety. Possessed by a *caboclo* spirit, a meek woman can behave like an aggressive *macho;* possessed by a *criança* (child) spirit, she can suck her thumb and demand sweets; possessed by a *prêto velho,* she can wield the authority of wisdom; and if she is brave enough to be possessed by an *Exu* (demon) spirit, she can work black magic on her enemies, or those of her clients.

Male mediums are rare, as a Bahian scholar explained to the anthropologist Ruth Landes when she was studying Candomblé in Salvador: "No upright man will allow himself to be ridden by a god, unless he does not care about losing his manhood. His mind should always be sober, never dizzy or 'tonto' [crazy] from invasions by a god....Some men do let themselves be ridden and they become priests with the women; but they are known to be homosexuals."

The rules of *machismo,* then, are not suspended in spiritual centers, but they do bend a little. Men serve as directors, advisors, financiers and drummers—reasonably authoritative positions—but their "capacity to impose themselves on others," as Paz defined *machismo,* is transferred to the

spirits. The women who allow themselves to be possessed by those spirits do acquire, however briefly, authority over clients who need help from the spirits—sometimes the very *machos* who otherwise assert authority over the medium.

The drama in which the medium is simultaneously powerless (as herself) and powerful (as the possessing spirit) oddly resembles the psychological drama in the torture chamber. Just as the torturer identifies with the powerlessness of his victim, so the medium identifies imaginatively with the power of her spirit. Torturer and medium have ample and sanctioned opportunities to enact and re-enact their parallel fantasies, and for similar reasons, as Stekel points out: "The specific scene which [the sadist or masochist] is always wanting to repeat is a drama, a fiction, which he as the author feels with the actors, suffers and enjoys. This fiction has as its purpose to withdraw him from the real world."

Medium and torturer regard the real world as unalterable and unsatisfying. Their activities will not change that world, but will help them to survive in it, both by escaping it and by soothing their anxieties. As Ruth and Seth Leacock concluded in *Spirits of the Deep,* their study of Batuque cults in Belém, "Every medium know that there are manifest inequities in life, that he is desperately poor, and that many other people are incredibly rich. Ordinarily, however, this situation is taken as being in the nature of things. There is no recognized political procedure for changing the way things are, and there is no...conception that any of the supernatural beings man can contact has any control over the nature of the world. The awful problems that the poor must face are part of the world, and the only hope man has is to gain supernatural support in coping with them."

Since not only the poor but nearly all Brazilians are powerless to alter their world, they come—not only the descendants of slaves, but the descendants of aristocrats—to spiritual centers for miraculous aid in dealing with the world as given. And they get it. For their numbness, their isolation, their powerlessness, the spiritual center offers excitement, a sense of community, and the aid of supernatural spirits. It provides an alternative to waiting in long lines at clinics for the impersonal care of overworked doctors; to hearing intimidated priests preach obedience to the present order; even to planning a revolution. For the spiritual centers siphon off some of the passion, the frustration, the agonized sense of impotence that results from trying to live in a police state that pretends it is a democracy.

People seem to need unrealities that they choose and construct to balance the unrealities that are thrust upon them. An elderly writer pointed out that in Brazil, "We are told, 'This is a democracy. We have due process. We have *habeas corpus.* If your friend has disappeared, why are you inquiring for him at the police station? We have no torture. We have no censorship.' What we do have is a sense of disbelief, of unreality." In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that many Brazilians cultivate their own magical alternatives to the reality they cannot endure or change. □

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Civia Cohen Tamarkin

Burma

There aren't two blue Mazda trucks in Rangoon. Not two baby-blue pickups. Not two baby-blue pickups of the same make. There aren't two of anything the same in Burma except the eyes. The empty black eyes with suspended stares that follow you everywhere, nailing you to the spot no matter how fast you are moving. Everything else is an indiscriminate collage of thirty year remnants patched with bootleg parts that were backpacked by porters across the Thai border. There are no Coca-Cola billboards, no neon lights, no Hondas or Holiday Inns, and even the slow trickle of foreigners allowed in Burma on seven-day visas have to bring their own toilet paper and toothpaste. So the riderless truck parked outside the rat running loft offices of Trade Corporation 20, the government tourist company, had to be the same watchshow that shadowed ten feet behind me down Sule Pagoda Road yesterday morning.

Time hangs forgotten over Burma. Outlining the unpainted square colonial buildings that all look as British as Stonehenge, their layers of whitewash peeled away down to World War II anti-Japanese slogans. Feeding the weeds sprouting from rooftops, the moss and black mold climbing on walls and pillars.

An unfair rain kept on. Hitting at a broken city already on its knees the way President Ne Win and his Burmese Way to Socialism hits at the Burmese. I walked Strand road, staying under the torn porticos of old civil service headquarters, and all the time the blue truck crawled arm and arm with me. The sidewalks were more crowded than usual with people fitted into doorways like mannequins or propped up motionless against the narrow dryness of an over-hanging roof. It was the four-day rain. Pounding through the cracked ceilings and pocked walls of the tight tenements, forcing the rats out from between the floors, and driving the people outdoors, away from the stench and dampness.

I'm not sure what number equals enough—but after you have been in enough countries, enough cities in Asia, you get used to the clutter and the uneasiness of never being able to lose yourself in it. It's like the dues you have to pay for intruding. Sacrificial rites among beggars and hawkers. But what I felt now was an odd sort of strangeness, not the conspicuousness of being a foreigner, not the conspicuousness of my own differences marking a line between the haves and have-nots. What I felt walking this street in Rangoon was the awkwardness that comes from an absolute consciousness. The embarrassment of total exposure. It's like there is this thing that is happening to you at the moment, and you know it is happening, and everyone else knows it is happening, and you know they know and they know you know that they know, and there is nothing anyone can do about it. Like when you were a kid and you raised your hand in the middle of a lecture and asked permission to leave the classroom and all the other kids knew where you were going and the teacher knew where you were going, and you knew they all knew. Anyway, that's how I felt walking Strand Road in the spotlight of that blue truck.

I wasn't afraid. You're only afraid when you don't know whether you're being followed and when all you have are nervous suspicions. In Burma you always know because they want you to know. It's the government's way of keeping up the us-against-them attitude that has run the country for the past fourteen years, since Ne Win's military takeover. The People's Park at the foot of Singattura Hill, beneath the gold-leafed dome of the Shwedagon Pagoda, is the rambling camp-site of a crack sharp-shooter division—part of the 120,000 man force that is one of the strongest in Southeast Asia. They were installed amid the lagoons and grassland during the U Thant riots in 1974, when university students protested the government's denial of a state funeral for the former UN leader, and they remain bayonet-ready cowing the hundreds of Burmese who climb the hill for daily devotion. And the dreaded MIS (military intelligence agents) are everywhere. You see them in the airport dressed in sarongs and short black Burmese jackets, standing among the white-uniformed Customs officers, double-checking for contraband goods. You see them behind the reception desk in the government-owned hotel, behind the switchboard, behind the counters in the government stores. And they are all as obvious as the crew that was tailing me—as obvious as a new Mazda sharing the streets with rusted-out '49 Chevies, extinct British-made Humber Hawks, Hino buses given as war reparations by Japan, and old US Army surplus Dodge trucks left from World War II. It is the price the Burmese have to pay for following the "way".

* * *

The Burmese Way to Socialism, which is how the government propagandists describe their policies, has created a vacuum between the government—meaning President Ne Win and a thin circle of his top advisors who are never allowed to get too close—and the majority of the country's thirty million people. Behind Ne Win's socialism is a tough military dictatorship that unhesitatingly has gunned down hundreds of students and imprisoned monks, intellectuals and political leaders. Military tribunals hand out harsh sentences for trivial offenses and since 1974 between 8,000 and 10,000 people have been sentenced to "Moscow"—a widely used reference for jail. At the tribunals there is no

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trial, no defense, no acquittal and no appeal. The hearings take place behind barred doors under watch of heavily-armed guards and are presided over by army officers who only read out the sentences handed from senior officers in the top echelon. All legal books have been abandoned—few judges can read—and most people believe you get seven years if you plead not guilty and four if you plead guilty. Township courts in the various suburbs are headed by judges who are loyal members of Ne Win's party. These judges, who have the power to hand out death sentences, are ordinary citizens without any legal background. One infamous magistrate can be seen at dawn hawking brooms on the streets of Rangoon, guaranteeing his merchandise with his judicial reputation.

* * *

I left my escort outside the hotel and went to pick up my room key at the desk. The clerk said it was too bad I cancelled my flight to Mandalay. No surprise at him knowing that I had just come from the tourist office, just as there was no surprise today at lunch when the waiter told me very paternally not to order ice cream since it was not good for someone who had been up all night with a bad stomach. I climbed the wooden-banistered staircase to the second floor, not really trusting the old two-person lift, and went into my room thinking it foolish to close the door but closing it anyway. I had the corner room—211—and the only other tourists in the hotel were above me in 311, 411, and 511. Something about the simplicity of vertical wiring, a friend later told me. I sat on a big flowered chintz papa-chair and watched the water pooling around the lamp cord. There were four pictures on the wall. The fifth one from above the desk had been removed and naturally, at target center of the faded rectangle outline, there was a nailhead sized hole. I suppose it could easily have been covered by some wadded wet tissues or stuffed with a cigarette butt, yet I liked the idea of undressing and lying spread-eagled on the bed, giving the MIS a real run for its money. After only four days I understood why people say you have to play golf to be a good Socialist in Burma. (Per capita, more golf is played in Burma than anywhere else. Sprinkling systems and heavy rains have knocked out all the bugs on the courses.)

The Strand is an old colonial hotel of high towering ceilings and bad plumbing. It's the last of the empire's breed where waiters in dirty white coats and short white gloves with orange-stained fingertips still set all thirty tables with full service for each meal, even though no more than five are ever used by guests. And they still serve British style with a soup course, a fish course, a gravy-drowned meat, and mush pudding for dessert, laughing if you ask for Burmese food. The wide-walled mausoleum-cum-ballroom hasn't been used for years and the baby grand in the corner is a stripped French Provincial hulk. The state simply can't afford the upkeep. Like other commerce and industry, the venerable Strand was snatched by Ne Win and nationalized into the twenty-two state trading companies. And like the rest of the Burmese economy, the Strand Hotel is seriously mismanaged under the controls of a military élite, who were distributed managerial favors on the basis of officer's rank. The administrative talents developed under the British civil service remain ignored and wasted, along with the talents of the other 50,000 unemployed students, college graduates, and intellectuals, all of whom the government mistrusts.

Along the sidewalk men and women strolled leisurely, puffing on fat Burmese cheroots. People encircled squatting figures playing chess with rocks on a checker board chalked on the pavement. I sat in the hotel bar trying to fill out the minutes. It was still a half hour before the dining room opened, and in the evenings there is nothing to do in Burma but wait for the dining room to open. Ne Win's drive against "decadent western culture" has wiped out all nightlife. There are no nightclubs in Rangoon—the supply of imported liquor dried up ten years ago when Ne Win's obsession for isolationism and self-reliance left Burma without a foreign exchange, and western music and dancing have been banned since last Christmas, when the President was disturbed by the noise of a diplomatic corps party and personally kicked in the drums of the rock band. A few movie theaters are open but tickets are usually sold out for the long-running, locally-made films that never seem to change. So little amusement is available that the block-house Russian-built hotel on nearby Inya Lake sells admission tickets to Burmese families who want to stroll through and see the place. Nobody seems to stay there or eat in the restaurant, but hundreds come to look. The bar at the Strand is the only thing to do and it does a roaring business in warm Mandalay beer until 10 p.m., when Rangoon clears its streets under rule of martial law. A few single dusty bottles of French champagne and London gin stand on the shelves behind the bar, but at a price of over fifty US dollars you need a damned good reason to celebrate and there hasn't been one in Rangoon for years.

They once called Burma the "Golden Land", a rice-rich nation of jade and pagodas. But the prime teakwood forests in the razor-backed mountains remain untouched and the Irrawady Delta, which was once the rice basin for the world, no longer produces enough rice to feed the population. Farmers only grow as much as they need to feed themselves and their families, rather than work for nothing by growing surplus crops that must be sold to a government consortium at a fixed, very low price. With an inflexible and inefficient régime bent on total control of the country's economy, productivity has plunged and the price controls have created an artificial scarcity in some commodities that are getting triple the normal price on the black market. While austerity may well be an integral part of any Socialist strategy of development, austerity in Burma merely compensates for declining production. Inflation is at an annual increase of forty per cent and, with only one general wage increase since 1948, the annual per capita income stands at $400. Bribery and black-marketeering have become daily necessities.

* * *

The crowd gathered quietly along St. John's Street beside the refuse-strewn railroad tracks and a few yards from the rows of foreign embassy residences. They were waiting for the train from the coast which was hours late, delayed like all of Burma's trains because stretches of signal cable along the tracks have been ripped out for resale on the black market. As the train finally creaked by, bundles of goods were thrown from the windows into the arms of waiting traders and passengers jumped from the cars clutching their parcels of contraband. The network of rickety open-air

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bamboo stalls flanking St. John's Street is the hub of illegal sales nicknamed Trade Corporation 23, in reference to the 22 state trading companies that have failed to supply the people's everyday needs. Everything from clothes to medicine comes from Trade Corporation 23. You either sell to it or buy from it, but if you don't live off the black market you don't survive. Some of the items that find their way to the hawkers' area are diverted from state factories or carried out the back doors of government shops. But most of the consumer goods are brought across the Thai border in exchange for Burmese jade, rubies, rubber, teak, and opium—as well as the elephants and pack mules that carry them. Trade Corporation 23 accounts for an estimated seventy per cent of Burmese commerce and is perhaps the biggest black market operation in the world. But Ne Win's government tolerates this parallel economy, turning a blind eye out of necessity. Without this one free enterprise the country would stop completely.

* * *

The narrow mud aisles between the stalls were pushed tight with bargaining customers all eager for the Japanese transistors, Chinese soaps, Indian toothpaste, and American medicines. And everyone seemed willing to pay the inflated prices of $30 for a 6-ounce jar of Nescafé instant coffee, $5 for a chocolate bar or an eight-slice package of Kraft cheese, $250 for a car tire and $1,000 for a Rolex watch. Chronic shortages leave the Burmese no alternatives. The poorly stocked government stores are completely sold out of merchandise within two hours of opening and even if desired goods are on the shelves, government employees often save them for favored customers who forget to take the change. Besides, the government stores sell inferior goods produced with quick-profit shortcuts—bad smelling yellow rice, baby formula with lime powder filler, soft drinks made with harmful food dyes, lipstick with a lead base, and shampoo that causes hair to fall out. There is no starvation in Burma, only malnutrition, and most people would rather gamble against that by buying quality merchandise on the black market. A far stall in the hawker's arena sells UNICEF-stamped bottles of medicine smuggled from refugee supplies in Bangladesh and Thailand. Physicians prefer to trust the black market suppliers rather than the government shops where a chronic shortage of anti-biotic drugs allows unscrupulous people to fill dummy capsules with flour or sand and sell them as Tetracyclin. The only incentives left among the Burmese seem to be directed toward finding purchasing power to trade with Corporation 23. People wait in lines at government shops for their quota of rationed items such as milk and cooking oil and then resell them at a profit to someone who is not willing to stand in line, or who needs more than he is allotted.

The taxi driver wanted to be paid in empty Nescafé jars but he agreed on three pocket-sized packs of Kleenex. I had him drop me off at the corner and I waited until he drove away before

walking up the gate to Sen Wen's house. The former newspaper publisher, whose English-language daily was nationalized twelve years ago, stayed behind the curtained partition of his study until his granddaughter settled me into the room and shuttered the windows. Three black male German shepherds hulked intimidatingly in the doorway. Sen Wen was a delicate man whose small features were made more frail by five years in prison. I handed him a small package that managed to pass through customs and I watched his pleasure as he unwrapped a pair of spark-plugs for his '51 Dodge fire-ambulance. It has become a Burmese art of sorts to keep cars running when no spare parts are available. In January the government issued new one-kyat coins, but by March they were out of circulation, melted down and used for car parts. Sen Wen poured demi-cups of Chinese tea and said we have become a nation of chiselers and lawbreakers, but we have passed the point where we see ourselves that way.

* * *

Joe apologized for the condition of his Volkswagen, saying that these days it was the best you could do in Burma. I offered him one of my Salems; seeing how he carefully drew long deep smokes, I gave him the whole pack. On the ride from the airport I shared a car with two young Australian hikers who sold a carton of Winstons to the driver for $22—enough to finance their week's stay at the YMCA. Burma may be the only place left where you can make it on $5 a day.

We drove out of the city along the green tree-lined streets to his father's home where I was delivering packages of soap and shampoo—presents from an American living in Thailand who couldn't stand returning to Burma and reliving her friends' tragedy. There was no traffic and Joe said that one of the benefits of Rangoon is that it is probably the only pollution-free city in Southeast Asia. Only the golden dome of the Shwedagon Pagoda pierced the sky. After the brassy hotels and traffic jams of Bangkok, I wanted to find a traditional charm about Burma. Instead there was an overwhelming sense of desolation.

Joe wanted to be a lawyer, but university quotas were filled so he was told by university administrators that he had to be a botanist. Now he drives a car for the accountant from an off-shore drilling operation. It is only a matter of months, he said, before he goes over the border into Thailand taking his chances with bought documents. The overland mountainous crossing is the only route out of Burma for political families and Joe's brother is serving a seven-year sentence for backing student dissidents. Some Burmese are able to obtain a travel visa, provided they pay a "brain tax" of several thousand dollars to compensate the government for their educational training. But the wait is two to five years and there is no guarantee that the visa will come through, or that the money will be refunded if it doesn't.

My father says we are Buddhists so we should know how to suffer, Joe said. But the system here is the worst form of cruelty. They take our minds, bodies, and ears. All we have left are our eyes, to see what they have done. □

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Kenneth Lash

Notes on the Human as an Experiment

Wholeness is a state of being which few have dreamed of and fewer have experienced. It has been the human birthright to be partial. Which we made the best of by celebrating. We have reinforced our partialness, made it a Good to be partial...under such rallying banners as family, tribe, nation, religion, occupation, sex, team. In primitive times we were partialized by narrowly specific place and function; in today's neo-primitive times we are partialized by being *treated as profoundly interchangeable* parts, smooth fits.

To the extent that we are partial, we are cut off from reality, which is simply the wholeness of existence. That troublesome "natural world," in which man is typically characterized as having one foot in and one foot out. I would add that we keep shifting feet, showing discomfort at our own intellectual slyness.

Man's problem with the natural world is that it does not cease to exist simply because he prefers to "transcend" it. We consistently give reality a bad press. Instead of modifying ourselves toward acceptance of the world of nature, we have modified our accounts of that world to fit our patterns of acceptance. When the emphasis of this account shifted from a creator-god who made and protected that world to a man-god who preëminently used it, trouble came to stay.

The belief in a Being beyond ourselves may have been an opiate or may have been a prescience of worlds beyond earth. Whatever it was, and whatever the harms of its inhibitings, it contributed to a central health, an essential poise, because it united man in his partialness to a great whole. He felt himself part of "the scheme of things." Thus his individual smallness had if you like psychic limits. But once "out of Nature," once he reset the boundaries of existence at his own life and death, there was no such limit to his smallness, no limit at all to his possible failure.

He had to guard against this Awfulness by as great and blind a faith in himself as once he had in Other. Having always consigned the senses to demons, i.e., anti-gods, he now consigned them to anti-reason. It was Reason that lifted man above the animals and toward the gods. So the

slavery of the senses went on, the divided man went on, the problem suddenly intensifying as the technological revolution removed man both from the nourishment of the natural world and the seemingly necessary digestive of the supernatural.

* * *

What we have come to is an essential malfunction. No doubt there has been too much change, disruption, pollution, cholesterol. But how has man evolved the ability to create all these things without evolving the ability to withstand them? Clearly, the Man is out of joint. A victim of lopsided evolution.

His intellect has run wild, and is engaged in a potentially fatal attack on his wisdom. It is possible that the great destructive technological tool is the brain itself. Because the brain is a tool. It is not Man, but a specially developed part of him. Unless it is used to generate a better quality of survival then man's brain itself fails, and space will close over it.

A troublesome fact about the current brain is the discrepancy between the power it wields and the number of people contributing to that power. Again the few. For most, the life of the mind is not the life of man. It is texture—we call it variety—which for most of us gives life the density that makes it feel like living. Texture in daily life depends almost exclusively on variations of emotional and sense experience. This may be primal or it may owe to the fact that the average mind is a bore, both to others and, more crucially, to itself.

Short of successful genetic fiddling, there seems no changing of the fact that nature and experience continue their combining to create an aristocracy of brains. And they're very stingy about it. Most of us have the brains we need to do crossword puzzles and walk around without falling into holes. Our opinions are an amalgam of unavoidable and endlessly determining childhood experience modified and/or reinforced by packaged goods from an assortment of teachers and other media, periodically rearranged to fit our experience without chafing. It is in the generality a mosaic of stone, not glass; our interest is in having opinions, not looking at them, and for others the first glimpse of our thoughts is the last fascinating one. I'm afraid the mass media exist because they must and always have, to fill a vacuum. The Sermon on the Mount was mass media. Not only a social but an intellectual necessity. As, perhaps, the "average" brain is a biological necessity.

It may be we'll find there are "average" senses too. But there's a likelihood at least that the senses, being older in origin and having been brought to a fine point of development in the early successes of survival, are not an aristocracy but a democracy,

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evolved to the state of a given. Less complex and sharply bright than thought, but more profound.

* * *

Until recent voyagings of the mind, confirmed and realized in our moongoings, it is possible that the most exciting of human lives was led by early prehistoric man. Everything fresh, every two steps a discovery, a dazzle of phenomena to be sorted out, domesticated, played with. But there was big trouble too—the part that couldn't be domesticated, wouldn't sort...the part where he himself felt played with. This latter part of his experience, so unutterably powerful, must soon have over-arched his day and possessed his night. My guess is that early in life Man was damn near scared to death. (He still is, when infancy re-enacts it all.) His clear given in the skies and winds was the existence of power so much greater than his that it could not be measured by anything he knew...so it had to be imagined. He imagined so effectively that his version of cosmic truth remained essentially unchanged for the rest of man's history up to the contemporary imaginings of science. His answer was that since the source of that extraordinary power could not be measured nor even seen, it must be both immeasurable ("infinite") and invisible (spirit, not flesh and bone). Clearly flesh and bone ended their dominion at death; and at death began the great measurelessness. It was from this realm that such powers must issue. And thus came The First Great Reversal: that life unending and powerful began with death, death was its portal. Thus "real" life is so powerless and temporary as to be an odd little interlude of laughing and crying, a trial deeply embedded in a dream...in fact, unreal.

The Second Great Reversal derives from the evidence that though Man was not, like Athena, born of brain and of brain full grown, he certainly was born with a highly developed ego. (Which may be a result of his weak intellect.) That is, positioning the source of Power outside of nature into supernature, guess what the supernatural source of such power looked like? Why, yes—Man Himself! And the more man evolved, the clearer this likeness became. In the beginning at least there were also wood spirits, rock spirits, animals, etc. But not for long. Pretty soon it was just an extraordinary man or woman (or both), of appropriate color. Even the Great Reptile proved a mere caterpillar with a man-shaped rascal forming inside. Cosmological democracy had arrived.

Well, it's logical enough. Man's only real experience is himself, so he was always the measure of all things. The trouble was not in the logic, but in the stars. The infinite price Man paid for fashioning a cosmos in his own image was that he peopled it with the spiritual embodiments of his own profoundest fear, and ringed himself round with anxieties. Hurt was transformed to punishment, death to an obsessive riddle. Hope became *salvation*, a compound of (a) being forgiven after "life" was over, (b) being recompensed for living by a powerful and/or perfumed afterlife. Codifying this fear/hope ambivalence into a system of law both religious and social, he not only became an ethical Prohibitionist but narrowly defined the limits of his own thought and feeling, i.e., of his own Awareness. On the one hand a depth of belief and great possible voyages of meditation; on the other a severely circumscribed life, both intellectually—to believe is to "solve," to cease the action of questioning—and emotionally—with little value ascribed to this world, the

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deep experiencing of daily life within it can be at best an amateurish piddling, at worst a mortal danger.

As a result of our having developed the use of only a fraction of the mind's potential, and of limiting the operation even of that fraction, life in this world has rarely been perceived as sufficiently profound to constitute an end in itself; further, with this kind of information filtering down from the mind, and with our emotional lives so limited by circumstances and hemmed by custom as to make us feel victims of an endlessly repeating cycle, life in this world has rarely *felt* real. It seems to swing like clockworks between numbness and nightmare, with the mass of us struggling over those seconds of pleasure...those intermittent times when we feel alive and glad of it.

More and more in both the historic and the individual aging of man, life has become something to be got through. Recent changes in our fundamental philosophy have as yet produced no favorable effect. We have simply lost an afterlife without gaining a significant present. Or one may maintain that as we have brought down the gods we have (necessarily) brought up the demons, and come through the mythworks of psychology to abjure damnation by Naming life in the lexicon of an illness.

Damnation, the Awful Possibility, has somehow got transmuted to a simple fact of life.

* * *

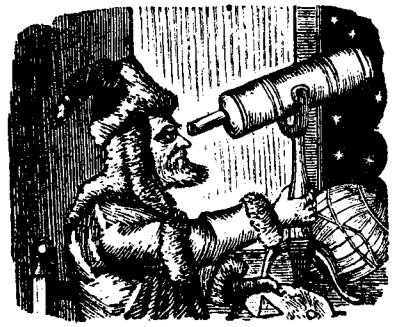
Suppose hell is in fact real. That it is Man's most vivid projection of the essential experience of living.

The essence of hell is an imprisonment featuring infinite torture...infinitely withstood. No fainting allowed. The way you arrive there is by giving in to sin, which we have long since discovered is a thorough categorization of almost everything we want to do. And of almost nothing we want to be. Hell has to do with the irresistibility of the moment and the act...and the utter resistibility of the delayed and the ideal. Difference in velocity ends by being difference in form and shape. We don't know what's good for us and, says Dostoyevsky, we don't care. What we really care about, says Freud, is to destroy, and if that includes ourselves so much the better. We end by doing what the Devil never could. We kill hell by dying.

Undoubtedly this version of our lives is partly accurate—we all feel it sometimes. But if it is thoroughly accurate, if human life is essentially a predicament of disappointed perfectibility spacing toward bitter powerlessness, then rage is at the center and we are designed to self-destruct. Indeed, this might already have happened if it were not so recently that we have been released from our long fear...and the respect for creation enforced by that fear.

The brain of Man began to break loose from imposed limitations in the Renaissance, the body in post-industrial democracy.

The Rise of the Common Man...but risen with the monies and the weapons of the Uncommon Man. This is the force shackled throughout all the thousands of years of previous human existence—by kings, priests, and poverty. Now here he comes. The Second Coming? If so, he rises



monstrously, with nothing of the saviour about him. He rises talking of himself not us, progressively furious and inexorably Against. Because he so often acts with no discernible logic and for no "real" gain, this Common Man is already the most uncontainable and feared criminal of all time. Abetted in every way by the mass media, which write his Book of Knowledge and keep it smartly updated, he freely ranges the alleys of our nerves. The archetypal anti-hero, all we know of him for certain is that he hates, he feels cheated. And may live to find himself cheated yet again because he can't afford himself. There's too damn many of him.

A terrible irony is that at the very moment when he clearly sees it with his eyes, at the first moment in history when he feels it is his to attain, affluence for the common man is already a bubble (inflation), and in very few years will be no more than a dissolving mirage. An immensity of bodies being born to need some of the earth's resources, and the great majority of those already here being re-designed to want more. And there's just so much.

So either we cat-and-dog it with our bombs...or, because bombs are the only fear and respect left, we sigh and start passing out equal shares.

I assume we'll do the latter, under whatever political guise we live. Fair enough, but there is this about equal shares: once received, they are not the stuff dreams are made on. They become invisible, like routine; unfelt, like habit. There is no way to pay attention to equal shares. Thus it seems likely that, through no moral growth of our own, world society must surely move away from the acquisition of materialities as the motivating energizer of the individual's life and the capstone of his success.

We are going to have to get back to the non-material as the center of our living and our being. The immense technological advance that began with a tool will have served its only material necessity...to provide the human being with the food and shelter he needs before he can get on with the next order of living. Although we may soon find ourselves moving closer to certain living patterns of the past, we do not in fact return to them. The material advance is crucial. And irreversibly decisive is the altered consciousness wrought in us by our own science. Ineradicable, it will not allow us a return to the religions. Only calculation, whether political or like the Jesus freaks hedonistic, evasive, can bring back the old images even temporarily. Our spirit has withdrawn from the supernatural. But what about the natural?

What happens if, having ceased to adore gods in favor of man, we take a further step and cease to adore man in favor of living? Life instead of death, nature instead of thing, process instead of product? Looking in fact to the earth instead of to the sky. Accepting the probability that Life itself is the first of all moralities...and there is no likely second.

It is sermonesque to suggest that all things are created equal. Yet we may find that checks and balances are so much a part of natural law that unless we correct man's imbalance in the universe its order cannot hold.

The human being would then prove a notably unsuccessful experiment. □

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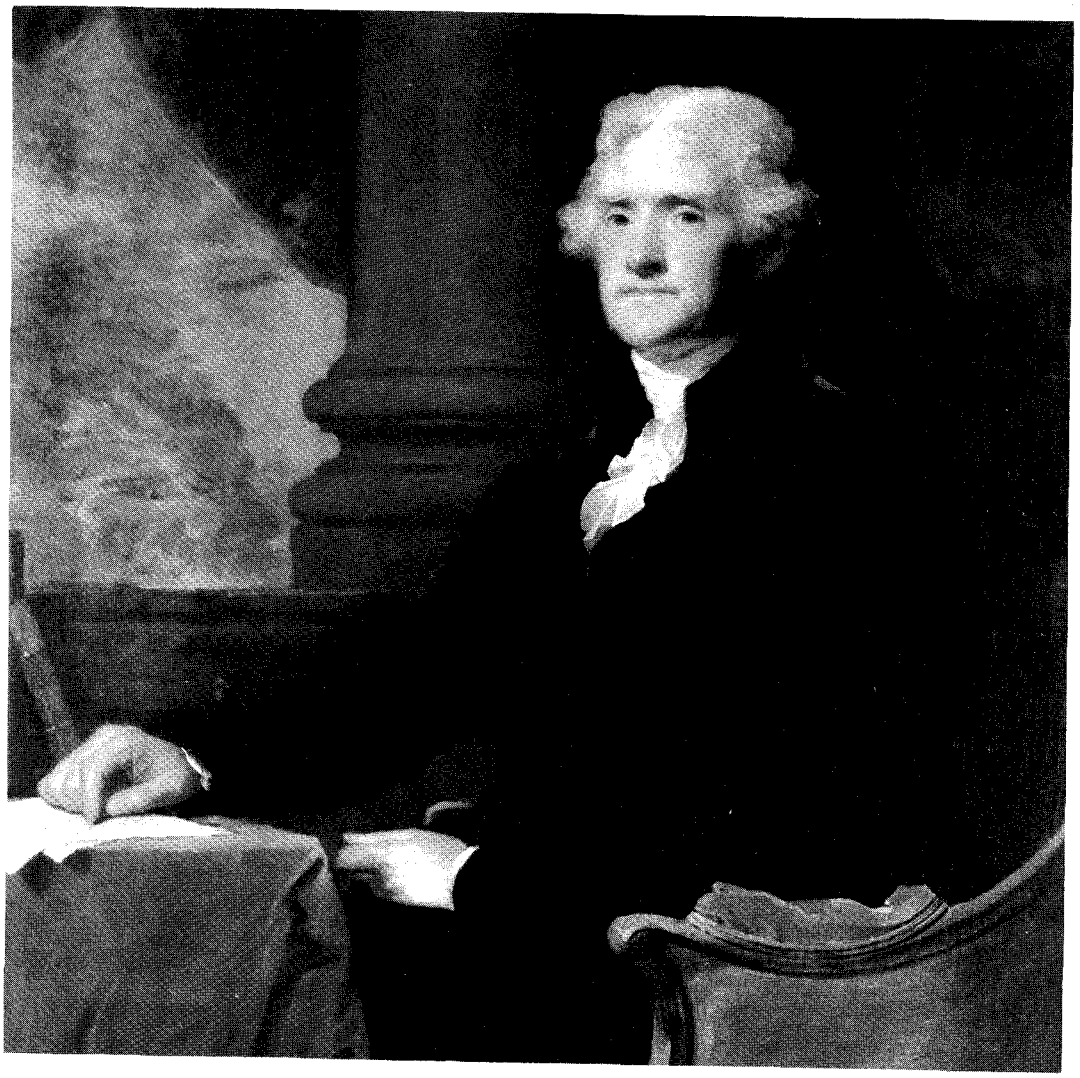
What Sort of Man Reads The North American Review?



Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. american review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to receive it from you. and this letter presented to Col. Bernard Peyton of Richmond will ensure your receiving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have received No. 46. but not Nos. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to receive. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th: J.

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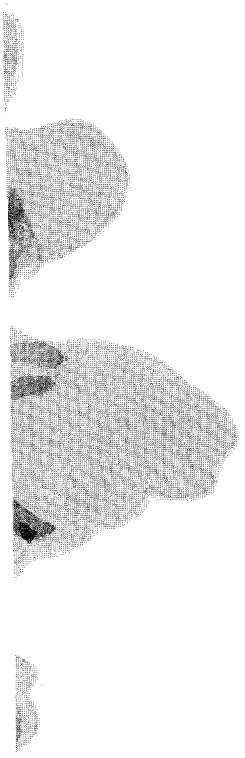
CONTRITION

BY ANDRE DUBUS



After school Paul and Eddie walked fast; it was a cold January day, the sky had been growing darker all afternoon, and they could feel rain coming on the wind. They crossed themselves as they passed the Cathedral; then they were walking by the Bishop's huge house, with its iron fence; on his lawn pines and live oaks thrashed in the wind. The next block was the bully's. He went to a public school, so they didn't know his name; he was tall and broad and he had a wide grinning face. If they saw him in his yard they turned and went home by another street. Sometimes he came outside as they were passing and they ran, at first in fright, and then after a few blocks when they looked back and saw he wasn't coming, in the laughing elation of escape. Sometimes he chased them and caught them; with their jackets bunched in his fists he pushed them back and forth and made them beg to be set free. Once as they neared the azalea bush at the edge of his lawn he stepped out from behind it and stood grinning at them; then he jerked the books from their arms and threw them into the street. They could have gone around his block or crossed to the other side of the street but going by the bully's house was their one brave act together, and they kept doing it. Today his lawn was empty. They walked the length of his block, then looked back over their shoulders and Paul felt another of those moments of relief which sprinkled his days.

"I'm going to learn an instrument," Eddie said.

Paul looked up at him, and then at the cars driving with their lights on. The whole town seemed to be hurrying home before the winter rain. He thought of Eddie going to a

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ANDRE DUBUS is a much-honored short story writer, and an old friend of the NAR. He has a Guggenheim this year and is on leave from his teaching duties at Bradford College.

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woman's house and taking piano lessons and at the end of the year playing in a recital, taking his turn among girls in velveteen dresses with barrettes in their hair.

"I'm not sure which one, though. I'm going to see Brother Eugene again tomorrow."

"Again?"

"I talked to him yesterday."

"You didn't tell me."

"I thought about it during vacation, and I talked to my folks about it."

"You'd take lessons at school? And be in the band?"

"I couldn't be in the band for a while. It's mostly just high school boys. But maybe by the eighth grade."

"When are the lessons?"

"Two afternoons a week."

"After school?"

"Yes."

Eddie was walking faster, looking up at the sky and the trees blowing above the rooftops. Paul thought of walking home those two afternoons alone. It wasn't the bully: he knew that immediately. In the third grade, when they had both entered Cathedral, Paul had chosen Eddie as his friend. Paul was short and thin and often pressed a handkerchief to his sniffling hayfevered nose. Eddie was taller, somewhere in height near the top of the class, but like Paul he moved with caution among the other boys, his voice seemed bent on silencing itself, and his gestures were close to his body as though apologizing for the space he occupied. No one had to throw a ball to them to know they would either miss it or catch it as if their arms were created for walking and were performing a task against their natures. So Paul had chosen him and he drew comfort from Eddie five days a week, hearing his soft, hesitant voice in class; Eddie usually knew the answers but his voice sounded as though he didn't; and at recess when they drank Cokes together; and on the athletic field where they watched each other's failures. Paul believed they could endure grammar school together and by the time they reached high school they would change or the world would change. He did not know precisely how. At Cathedral the boys started in the third grade and went through the twelfth and sometimes when he thought of that he saw himself and Eddie unchanged and outcast until finally they crossed the stage wearing caps and gowns. But most of the time he believed when they reached high school the days would no longer cost so much of fear and patience and hope. Now Eddie had decided alone to go out there and learn to play an instrument.

"We better hurry," Eddie said, and started to run. They were a block from his house when the rain fell hard and cold, and their faces dripped and they shivered as they stomped into the kitchen where Mrs. Kirkpatrick was moving toward the door, wearing an overcoat and scarf.

"I was just going to get you," she said, and kissed Eddie. Susan was sitting at the table, and she was smoking. "Paul, you'd better call your mother and tell her I'll take you home. We'll have hot chocolate." She hugged Eddie. Paul hung his jacket on a hook by the door and rubbing his hair with his handkerchief he secretly watched Susan who was sixteen and pretty, with hair that was light brown, almost blonde, the color of Eddie's, and bright red lips and fingernails. He watched her inhaling and tingled with guilt and delightful fascination for the secret and forbidden.

Only wicked girls smoked in high school. Other girls did too, but not on dates and not in public; they only did it secretly with their girl friends and no one else saw them until they graduated and then they walked about town carrying their wallets and packs of cigarettes. One Saturday afternoon as Paul and Eddie were walking home after a Red Ryder movie Eddie said he had gone upstairs yesterday and found Susan and his mother smoking in Susan's room and they had told him not to tell his father because he would be hurt. Eddie told this with the worried, conspiratorial tone of someone confiding a sin. Now here was Susan, and he looked at her brown Philip Morris pack on the table and the cigarette in her hand, and as well as guilt and delight he now felt envy, and isolated by it he moved through the kitchen, into the hall, toward the phone.

Amy was sixteen and she didn't smoke, he knew that because he spied on his sisters, but he knew if she did she would not tell his mother or father. Barbara was thirteen and he knew from the way she watched people smoke that in high school she would smoke and she would do it secretly. He did not want to smoke in high school because he did not want any more secrets. Yet here in the Kirkpatrick house there seemed to be only the one secret, and it was kept from Eddie's father in a lovingly collusive way, like a gift. Eddie had said he told his father about everything that bothered him: the bully on the way home, and how unhappy he was at school when they had to play football and then basketball and then softball.

In Paul's house everyone was a secret. One Saturday evening last summer his parents had gone out; it was twilight when they left and Paul was in the back yard; he was lying under the fig tree, the last Marine alive on Wake Island, when he heard the car doors slam and the engine start. He crawled out from under the fig tree and ran around to the front yard, to the driveway, but they were gone, they were at the end of the block, and he watched the tail lights as his father braked and then drove on. His sisters were inside the house but he did not go in. He went back to the fig tree and lay under it, in the darkness and sadness under the wide leaves. Always before his parents went out they kissed him and his sisters. Now he lay unkissed, and thinking of the back of the car as it drove away he began to cry. In the sweet luxury of tears he pressed his face into the grass until he heard the back door close. He lay quietly. In the pale dying light Barbara came across the lawn; she approached him and walked past the fig tree and stood with her back to him. She was looking up at the sky. Then he saw that she was crying. At first she cried quietly, but then she began to moan and sob. Finally she wiped her face with her hands and went sniffing past him and into the house. He waited a while then left his tree, his tears, his foxhole; from the top of the tree a mockingbird screamed at him.

The memory of Barbara that summer night was pleasurably mysterious, and often when he thought of her he saw her weeping at the sky. There were other memories he kept in his heart like old photographs. His father rarely talked at home, but when friends came for drinks Paul lay on his bed and listened to the drone of the women at one end of the room and the loud talk of the men at the other

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and, above it all, his father. He heard his father tell stories about when he was first married and he was a surveyor for the utilities company he still worked for; now he was a district manager. His father had worn a holstered .22 Colt Woodsman and shot cottonmouths in the rice fields. Once one of the crew caught a king snake and carried it in a paper bag until they found a cottonmouth; he threw the king snake on it and the crew watched them fight; listening to his father's voice through the wall he could see the twining snakes and the cottonmouth's slow death. A man who owned land they were surveying told his father to get off and said his company was nothing but a bunch of crooked sons of bitches anyway and his father knocked him down. Once they had to deal with a Negro and when the talking was done the Negro offered his hand and his father took it. In the car one of the crew said: You shook his hand. His father said: And if I hadn't, *then* who would have been the gentleman?

His father often said children should be seen and not heard and at times it seemed that Paul's silence made him invisible too and he could listen like a spy. On an afternoon last summer he sat petting his yellow dog Mike. He sat on the bottom step of the back porch and his father and mother sat on the top step. His father had finished mowing the lawn and Paul smelled his sweat and the beer he was drinking and the smell of clean dog and freshly cut grass; Mike turned on his back and grinned while Paul scratched his belly. Above Paul his parents were murmuring, and with his fingers on Mike's ribs he concentrated all of himself into one ear, and the muted sound of their voices became words.

"I'm afraid to," his mother said.

"We can use rubbers."

"Don't talk that way."

He heard his father's Zippo, then smelled the smoke. It was all he smelled in the air now. His father and mother sat quietly behind him.

When he returned to the kitchen from calling his mother Mrs. Kirkpatrick was stirring chocolate on the stove. They were drinking it when the front door opened; Susan put her cigarettes in her purse and Mr. Kirkpatrick came in; he was a slender, gentle man whose posture was slightly stooped. He greeted them all and spoke of the rain and tousled Eddie's hair, then made himself a drink and joined them at the table.

"I told Paul I'm going to take an instrument."

"What do you think of that, Paul?"

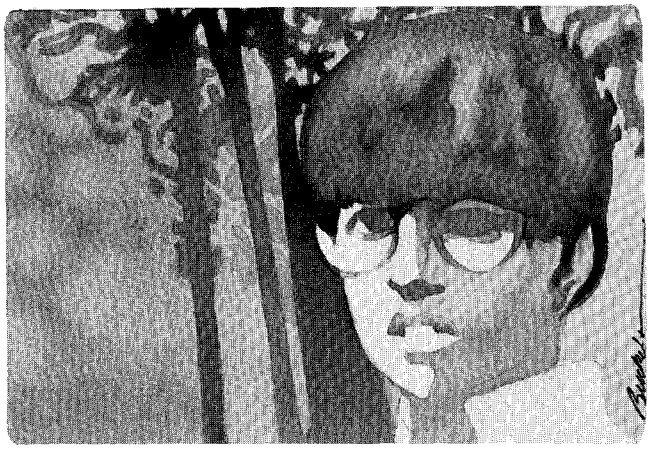
Mine's better, he thought, looking at Mr. Kirkpatrick's kind brown eyes with crinkled corners and seeing his father's ruddy face and blue eyes and thin wavy hair, nearly black now though his mother said when she met him it was blond curls; seeing his father's broad shoulders and deep hairy chest and hairy arms and hearing the gruff voice; he was shy with all fathers, he went each year in dread to the Rotary father and son luncheon where, in turn, he had to stand on a chair and speak his name to the upturned faces; yet he wasn't shy with Mr. Kirkpatrick, he felt with him now stirrings of relief, felt drawn to him as though by trust and love, and he wanted to say: *Music is for sissies;* he wanted to say: *Susan smokes;* he wanted to say: *I could beat up Eddie;* and he wanted to show them he could.

"I guess it's all right," he said.

"You should do it too," Susan said. "Y'all could learn together."

"Maybe I will," he said.

Next day the sun and a cold wind dried the earth and after school Paul and Eddie talked to Brother Eugene. He was tall and kept pushing his glasses up on his nose and his black robe smelled of chalk dust where he had wiped his hands. They told him they wanted to learn the trumpet but he said they should take the French horn. He took them up the wooden stairs to the second floor and unlocked the bandroom and showed them a French horn. He said if they learned to play it they could easily play the trumpet and cornet as well; but they should learn the French horn because the band had all the trumpet-players it needed for years to come but soon there would be a shortage of French horns. If they worked hard they could start playing in the regular band in two years when they were only in the seventh grade; they would wear uniforms and go on band trips to play at football games and they would march in the homecoming parade and Mardi Gras parade and many



colleges gave band scholarships. He raised the horn to his lips and blew a series of notes.

When he got home he told his mother and sisters. Amy said Maybe he'd be a famous trumpet player like Harry James, Barbara said It might be nice and his mother said It was very exciting but they would have to wait and see what Daddy said. She made cinammon toast and a pot of tea and they all sat at the kitchen table. He watched Barbara eating some of the crust; when he had finished his toast she glanced at him and quickly gave him hers; she was trying to lose weight but only Paul knew. Eating the toast he looked across the table at his mother and Amy; they had not seen.

When his father came home Paul listened through the closed kitchen door to him and Mike. From windows he had watched Mike greeting his father as he emerged from his car, his father's near-scowling face suddenly laughing as the dog ran to him and leaped up at him, his father crouching and pushing Mike back with gentle slaps, Mike growling and wagging his tail and barking, jumping again and again to his father's hands and loving voice. Now in the living room they were laughing and growling, and they came into the kitchen, Mike following through the swinging

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door, and his father's sweeping glance quizzical in the silence which he then broke with hello, kissed Paul's mother, poured bourbon and water, and went to the living room to read the evening paper.

Usually at supper his mother and sisters talked about school and the nuns or a dress his mother was making for one of them or about other things that Paul paid no attention to while he ate. But that night they were quiet and he knew they were waiting for him. Amy and Barbara sat opposite him, wearing their glasses. Always his mother told them not to wear their glasses to the table, that they should get in the habit of wearing them only to read. When Amy came into the living room dressed for a date, Paul's mother told her to take her glasses off. Boys don't make passes at girls who wear glasses, she said. Take off your glasses, his mother said to Barbara when she was dressed for Mass. Be sure to take your glasses off, she told them both when they left for school on the day pictures were to be taken. But tonight she said nothing. They ate quietly. Mike came to watch them and his father said: "Mike, you know better than that. Go back to the living room. Go on."

Mike went back and lay on the rug, watching them.

"Paul?" his mother said. "Did anything new happen at school today?"

Paul looked at her urging brown eyes. Then his father said: "Why should anything new happen?"

Watching his mother he saw that the question was to her.

"I don't know," his mother said. "It can't be the same *every* day."

Barbara was watching him. He looked at her and said: "It's pretty much the same every day."

When they finished eating his father took a piece of ham to the living room and dropped it between Mike's paws.

That night he lay in the dark in his room adjacent to the living room and listened to them through the wall. He knew it was eleven o'clock because his father had finished reading. Every week he read *The Saturday Evening Post, Time, Collier's, The Reader's Digest, Life,* and a mystery or a book by a golf pro. While he read Mike slept beside his chair and now and then his father's hand lowered, with stroking fingers, to Mike's head. At eleven o'clock he slept.

"Paul wants to take the French horn."

"Where's he going to take it? To the picture show?"

"He's serious about it."

"Who, him? Who talked him into it?"

"Nobody did. Eddie's going to start, and they've talked it over, but I'm sure Eddie didn't—"

"Ah: Eddie. When was all this?"

"Today."

"Today. All of a sudden he's a musician. Did you ever hear that boy say he wanted to be a musician till now?"

"Well there has to be a first day for everything."

"Why didn't he tell me himself? Is that what all that monkey business was about at supper?"

"He was afraid to."

"Afraid to? Did he tell you that?"

"No, he—"

"Did he ask you to ask me?"

"No, I just—"

"Why is my son afraid of me? Can you tell me that? I've spanked that boy three times in ten years. What's he afraid of?"

"He's very sensitive."

"Sensitive. If he's so sensitive why doesn't he know—Never mind: do they have the horns at school?"

"You have to buy one."

"Buy one."

"Or maybe rent one."

"Or rent one. Goddamn."

"It means a lot to him. He'll be in the high school band. Maybe he can get a college scholarship."

"Goddamn," his father said.

At breakfast his father was reading his paper. Paul waited. He had finished his oatmeal and milk and toast, the girls had gone to brush their teeth, his mother was putting the dishes in the sink, and finally he rose to leave too when his father lowered the paper and looked at him.

"What's this your mother tells me about a French horn?"

The blue eyes were gazing into his and he could see in them the silence when he and his father were trapped together in a car, and the relief he felt at all his father's departures and the fear at his arrivals.

"I decided not to," Paul said. "It costs too much."

"Wait a minute: that's not what I asked. Do you want to play the horn?"

"I guess so."

"Son, I can buy a horn; I can borrow for that. Do you or don't you want to learn to play it?"

"Yesterday you wanted to," his mother said, and he looked at her. She quickly nodded her head, then gestured with it toward his father, then nodded again. In one of his frequent daydreams he was captured by a band of amazons and taken to a tropical island where they lived; they were tall and lovely and they fed him and cared for him and he could not leave. There was some threatening yet attractive mystery about them too, as if they all shared a secret and it had to do with him; perhaps one morning they would tie him to an altar and sacrifice him to the sun; his heart plucked out, his soul would rise above the beautiful women. He wished he were with them now.

"Yes, I'd like to," he said.

"All right," his father said, the paper rising into place again; then from behind it he muttered: "Why didn't you say so."

Paul stood there until he was sure his father was reading again and was not waiting for an answer.

Twice a week Paul and Eddie arrived at school carrying their cased horns bumping against their legs and in the afternoon, after an hour's lesson, walked home with them. Paul was a victim of newspaper and magazine cartoons. Why hadn't he thought of the *size* of the horn? In cartoons only the inept carried large instruments, usually tubas, and their practicing made cats and dogs howl, neighbors shout, close windows, throw old shoes. Now on the afternoons of music he walked past the bully's with new dread: not

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because the horn would slow his flight but because it was a flag of capitulation, a sign to the bully that all the time he had been right about them. And on the rest of his walk home he was no longer anonymous: anyone driving by could see what he was. At home after supper he went to his room and closed the door and tried to play the notes. The horn was silver with a shiny brass bell and holding it and depressing its valves smelling of oil he wished he could give it the love it deserved. His father had brought it home and opened the case on the dining room table and displayed for Paul and his sisters and mother the horn nestled in red felt. A hundred dollars, he said; I hope it's worth it. Oh let's don't talk about money, Paul's mother said; I hate the dirty old stuff. Two days later Eddie's father bought a used horn, a gold one with two dents on the bell, and Paul felt deceived.

Sitting in his room he looked at the notes on the page; they made no sense to him. He began to hate the notes themselves, the way they sat inscrutable and arrogant on the stern bars which he didn't understand either. At times he thought he was simply stupid; he would have preferred that to the truth which sometimes surfaced in his mind: that while he and Eddie sat before Brother Eugene tapping the music sheets with his baton, tapping their horns with his baton, sometimes tapping their knuckles and heads with his baton, Paul was not there: he watched himself looking at the notes; he listened to himself trying to blow them; and all the time he was in suspension, waiting. He was waiting for something to happen. One afternoon he would all at once love the horn, he would know and love the notes, and his lips would blow sweet silver. Or one day someone would steal his horn. Or the school would burn to the ground or Brother Eugene would drop dead.

On the first night he practiced at home his father said it sounded like a bullfrog. Paul said it was hard to get the lips right. He played every night for the first two weeks, making sounds that had nothing to do with the notes he glared at on the sheet, wanting to cross them out with a pencil, to gouge them with its point. For the first time in his life he was living a public lie. With his father he had lived a lie for as long as he could remember: he believed his father wanted him to be popular and athletic at school, so Paul never told him about his days. But now the lie had spread: it touched his mother and Amy and Barbara and Brother Eugene and even Eddie. He hated the lie, not for its sin but for its isolation; and every Tuesday and Thursday he carried the horn to school as though it were a dead bird; and in the afternoons he climbed the stairs with Eddie to the band room and to Brother Eugene's growing impatience; then entering his house he put the horn on the closet floor, wanting to kick it, and at supper he answered questions about his music lessons. After two weeks of practicing at home his father asked him, the gruff voice trying to be gentle and bantering, if he'd practice when he came home from school. As lovely as the French horn is, his father said, it wasn't meant to accompany reading.

Nor was anything else. When his father came home in the evenings Amy took her records off the record player. After supper, except during the Sunday night radio shows, the living room was quiet. If friends of Amy or Barbara came over they went to the girls' bedroom and closed the door. The phone was in the hall and when Paul talked to Eddie at night he turned his back to the living room and spoke in a low, furtive voice. Lying in bed he could hear Mike scratching a flea, his father returning one magazine to the rack and getting another, his mother yawning in the chair where she read. But he was grateful for that silence resting on his horn too. He started practicing before his father came home; but if his mother was shopping or playing bridge he put the horn away and when she came home and asked if he had practiced he said yes. He saw the end coming.

He did not know how it would come, and when it did he felt betrayed again: Eddie quit. He phoned Paul on a Wednesday night and said he wasn't going to the lesson tomorrow.

"I haven't enjoyed it very much," he said. "Have you?"

"I don't know. It hasn't been so bad."

"I've hated it. I don't like the French horn. It's big and clumsy and I don't like the sound. I wish now I had taken the clarinet. Daddy says Brother Eugene used us, he talked us into the French horn so he'd have some for the band. He says if I want to take the clarinet after a while I can get lessons from somebody in town."

"What about the horn. What are you going to do with the horn?"

"He'll sell it back to the store."

The phone was outside his sisters' room. Barbara had been reading on the bed she shared with Amy; now she was watching him. When he hung up she said: "Eddie quit, didn't he."

"Yes."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I don't know."

"Why don't you quit?"

He shrugged.

"Just tell Daddy you've tried it and you don't like it. He can sell the horn. Paul: what are you going to do—take those silly lessons till you're twenty-one years old?"

Next day he went to his lessons. Without Eddie, his clumsy hypocrisy filled the room: as Brother Eugene called for a note Paul assumed a look of memory and concentration while his fingers depressed any valves they touched and he blew into the horn. Brother Eugene paced back and forth, turned his back to Paul, then spun to face him.

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"Paul, you're not practicing. You've learned nothing in a month. At least when Eddie was with us you could watch his fingers. Why aren't you practicing? Don't you know you owe it to your father? He had to sacrifice to buy that horn. It's a beautiful horn. If you have no pride in yourself, can't you at least do that much for your father?"

"He won't let me."

"What do you mean, he won't let you?"

"He won't let me practice. He likes quiet in the house."

Brother Eugene tapped the music stand once with his baton then pushed his glasses higher on his nose.

"Maybe I better talk to him," he said.

"You better not," Paul said. "He's Episcopalian, and he doesn't like Brothers. He—"

"He what, Paul?"

"I heard him talking once—he wants to—"

"He wants to what, Paul?"

"He wants to use those things. With my mother."

He looked down at the horn in his lap. Then he stroked it with his fingers and looked at Brother Eugene's robe and shoes.

"We can stop for today," Brother Eugene said. "If you'd like to talk about the other—"

Paul shook his head.

"It's all right," he said. "And I can practice in the afternoons. Just there's not much time."

He took the mouthpiece from the horn and put the horn in its case.

In the kitchen his mother said, "I never did think that was the right instrument for you. But Daddy will be disappointed."

"Why should he be?" Barbara said. "Nobody has to play the French horn."

"Well, he spent a lot of money on that horn." She looked at Paul. "Are you going to tell him? I want you to stand up like a man and tell him yourself."

"Okay," he said.

He went out to the back yard. The day was blue and warm and he stood waiting in the sunlight, clinging to the vision of tomorrow when it would all be over, until in the shadows of twilight he heard the slamming of his father's car door and then Mike growling happily. When those sounds stopped he went into the kitchen as his father pushed through its door. His mother was at the stove and Barbara was gone. He looked quickly at his father and said: "I want to quit the horn."

"What?" His father still wore his hat, and his overcoat was over his arm. "You want to *what?*"

"Now don't shout at him," his mother said.

His father looked at them both, then sighed and shook his head.

"Goddamn," he said, and went back through the door; he went through it fast and it swung twice behind him before it closed.

"You should have waited till he had his drink. You know I always wait till he's had his drink."

When his father came back he had taken off his coat and tie and rolled up the cuffs of his white shirt. He was midway across the kitchen toward the liquor cabinet when he stopped and looked at Paul: "What do you mean, you want to quit? You've only been at it a month! You haven't even *started* the Goddamn thing! Why do you want to *quit?*"

Paul shrugged and looked down, then raised his eyes to his father; his father's face was blurred. He blinked and it was clear again and he was too ashamed of the tears on his cheeks to wipe them.

"Goddamnit what are you *crying* for. What's he *crying* for." His father stood between them, his fierce clenched jaw now turned to her. "*Why* is he crying! Okay, he wants to quit the Goddamn horn. *Okay*. I can't *make* him play it. He stands there crying. *I'm* the one who borrowed the Goddamn hundred dollars. What'll I do with that horn now, huh?" He looked at Paul. "Huh? Can you tell me that?"

"We can sell it," his mother said.

"We can sell it." His father looked at her. "That's not even the point. Why in the hell did he ever think he wanted to play the Goddamn thing to begin with? He didn't *ever* want to. It's just something he and the other one, Eddie, dreamed up. When did Eddie quit?"

"I don't know," his mother said. "Yesterday. Brother Eugene shouldn't have—"

"The hell with Brother Eugene. What's *he* got to do with it? I pity the poor bastard for wasting his time. With *what?*" Looking at her, he pointed a finger at Paul. "What's he good for? Not a Goddamn thing. He doesn't do one Goddamn thing but mope around the house, he's not good for one Goddamn thing but to go to cowboy shows and shoot Japs and Indians in the back yard. What the hell else does he do? Huh? What else?—" Paul would not remember the rest. In the explosion of his father's voice he stood with the tears he would not wipe. Once he felt he was kneeling with his head bowed. Finally the sound ended and he left the room and his father's face. He went to his room and lay face-down on his bed and wiped his eyes. Then he lay on his back and looked at the ceiling. Barbara came in and sat on the bed and held his hand. She looked as though she might cry.

"He's terrible," she said.

In her pink cheeks and blue eyes he saw himself, saw the narrow breadth of his soul which in ten years had learned nothing of courage and so much of lies; to her face and the clasp of her hand he silently asked his father's question—*What's he good for?*—and he could not accept the answer of her gaze and touch, that he was a little brother she loved. Closing his eyes he found no answer there either, in the dark of his mind where memories of himself swam: he saw the day of snow when he was five, the only time in his life he had seen snow and that night it melted; in the afternoon his father came home and threw snowballs at them and one hit Paul in the eye and he cried and his mother said: *You're too rough with him, he's only a little boy*; and he saw one night when he was two and after supper his father picked him up and held him laughing and tossed him in the air and caught him, then again, both of them laughing as his father tossed and tossed while his mother's voice cut through the blur of ceiling and walls and his father's arms and laughing upturned face: *You'll make him sick*, and then he was, in the air, and on the rug as his father lowered him to the floor and her voice started again. Opening his eyes to look at Barbara he murmured: "No he isn't." □

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FREDERIC WILL

EPICS OF AMERICA

XII: TRUCKER

i
He has made the truck,
hammered the last yellow fender.
The truck dreams of prairie fodder.
Its axles are diamond in the sun.

He asks himself softly,
When will I take the truck apart?

ii
Rest stops let him take the truck apart.
He can put this part here, that part there.
He can unwind gears.
He can put gears together.

He looks at the thrilling vehicle.

In the next town, he says,
I will go before magistrates.

I will show them all the parts of the truck.

I will unmake the panels.
I will mend my ways.

iii
Softly and surely he mends his ways.
He turns to the thick tuft of pines,
Nods twice, folds up the truck, and advances.
He feels the truck shift in its wrapping,
Caresses it, and thinks of the pine tuft.
Suns set and fall.
This time, he says to himself,
I will carry the truck into the center of a garden.
I will put it among flowers.
I will leave it standing and silent,
Equal to itself.

I will put it together,
Construct it from the bluegreen color of the afternoon sky.

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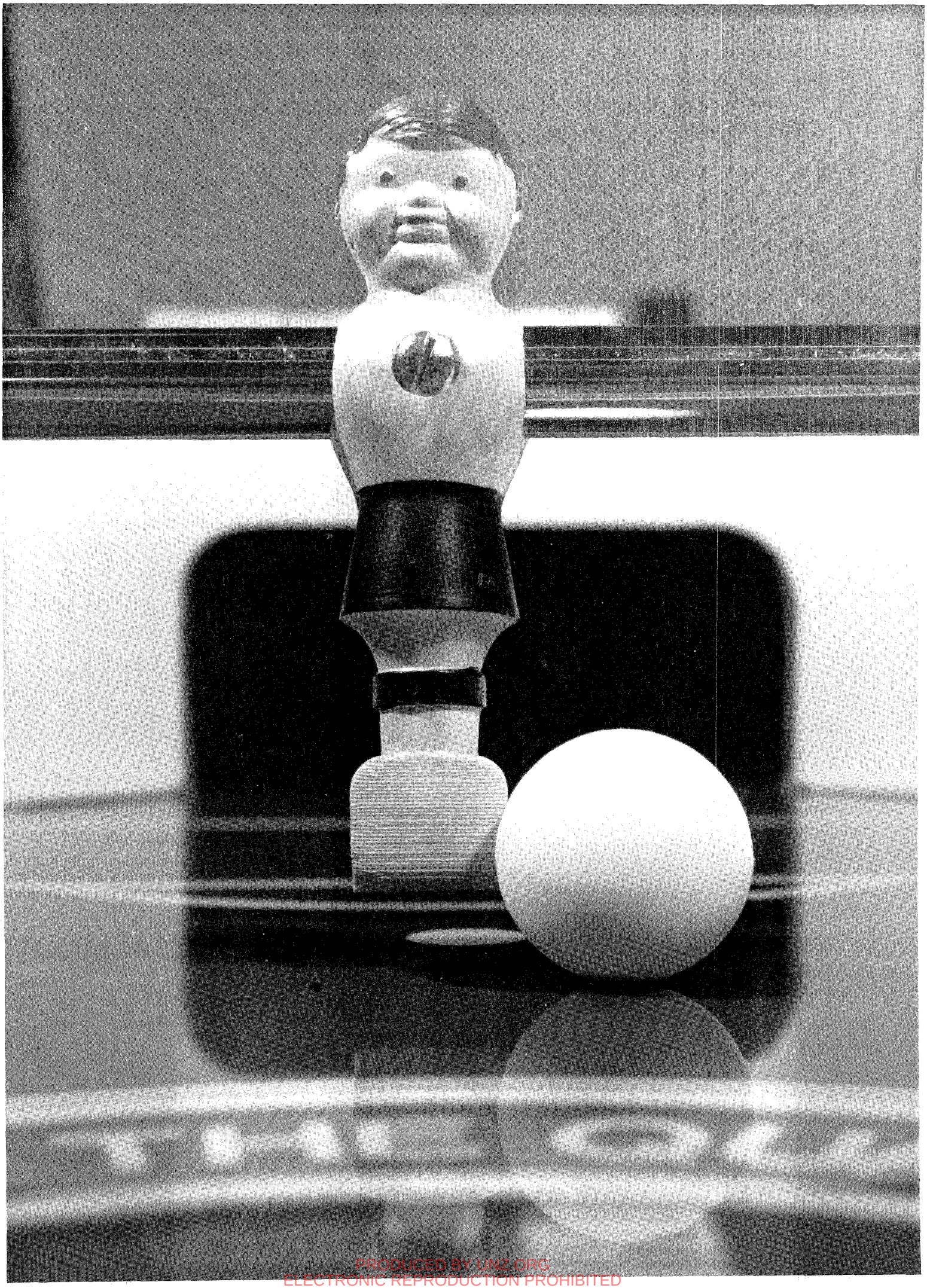

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ARE YOU WITH THE SOCCER?

"Me and my partner got our feet wet today."

I'm standing watching a girl named Jane and a fellow I don't know playing foosball and this kid comes up behind me and starts talking. He's maybe fifteen, doesn't look like a fooser—no hat, no beard, no visor, no decorated T-shirt, short hair. Nervous.

"What?"

"Me and my buddy got our feet wet here. We played in the tournament."

"Win anything?"

"Nope. We got wiped out, but we got our feet wet anyway."

"You practice much?"

"Yeah. We got a table at my house. Not this good, though, but we're savin' up."

It's two p.m. in the middle of August at the Rosedale Shopping Mall outside Minneapolis. Here in the middle of the mall between two fountains in a courtyard surrounded by The Wicks N' Sticks Shop, The Nina Boutique, The Singer Sewing Center and The Chess King Men's Clothing Store, Kirk McKennon has set up twenty-four Tournament Soccer brand foosball tables. Kirk and his wife, Jody, and foosball guru Billy Sumption and some other people from Hanson Distributing Company are running a little promo tournament. Hanson is the Minneapolis area distributor for Tournament Soccer brand foosball tables.

This Rosedale tournament is a warm-up for the Big One, the Minneapolis Nationals, the One Hundred and Twenty-Five Thousand Dollar World Championship Foosball Tournament that will be held at the great Radisson South hotel in South Minneapolis Labor Day weekend. The foosball tables at the Big One will be just like the ones here today at Rosedale. If you're going to the finals in the Big One, you'd better warm up on the right kind of table. Tournament Soccer brand tables are fast and tricky.

"It's hard to get up for a little tournament like this," Billy Sumption says. "I was in the finals of the Denver Nationals last year and I was really up for that. Awesome." He looks at me and smiles. "But I think I'm getting old. I'm twenty-eight. Really too old for this sport. My reflexes are slowing down. Foosball's like any other sport, like tennis or basketball. You've got to have good reflexes. I'm afraid I'm slowin' down."

Billy is a chubby, red haired, freckled, baby-faced, smiling player from the Dakotas who is a kind of folk hero in the Minneapolis foosball world. He is also a foosball public relations man who works eighteen hours a day promoting the game as a sport. Billy gives lessons—"I give a Ph.D. in foosball. I'm the only man in the country who can say that." He gives demonstrations and makes television appearances and talks foosball to anybody who will listen. Here at the tournament and downtown at Moby Dicks he's the grand old man of the game. "Billy lives for foosball. It's his whole life. Everybody in Minneapolis knows that." Billy is also one of the top three executives at Hanson Distributing Company.

GOALIE. A table top view of the foosball, the goalie and, behind him, the goal. The smooth hard surface of this type of table makes for a fast and skillful game. Like the other "men" on the table, the goalie is approximately six inches tall. Foosball men are made of either wood or plastic and are carefully balanced on the rods to give a maximum amount of power when the rod is turned.

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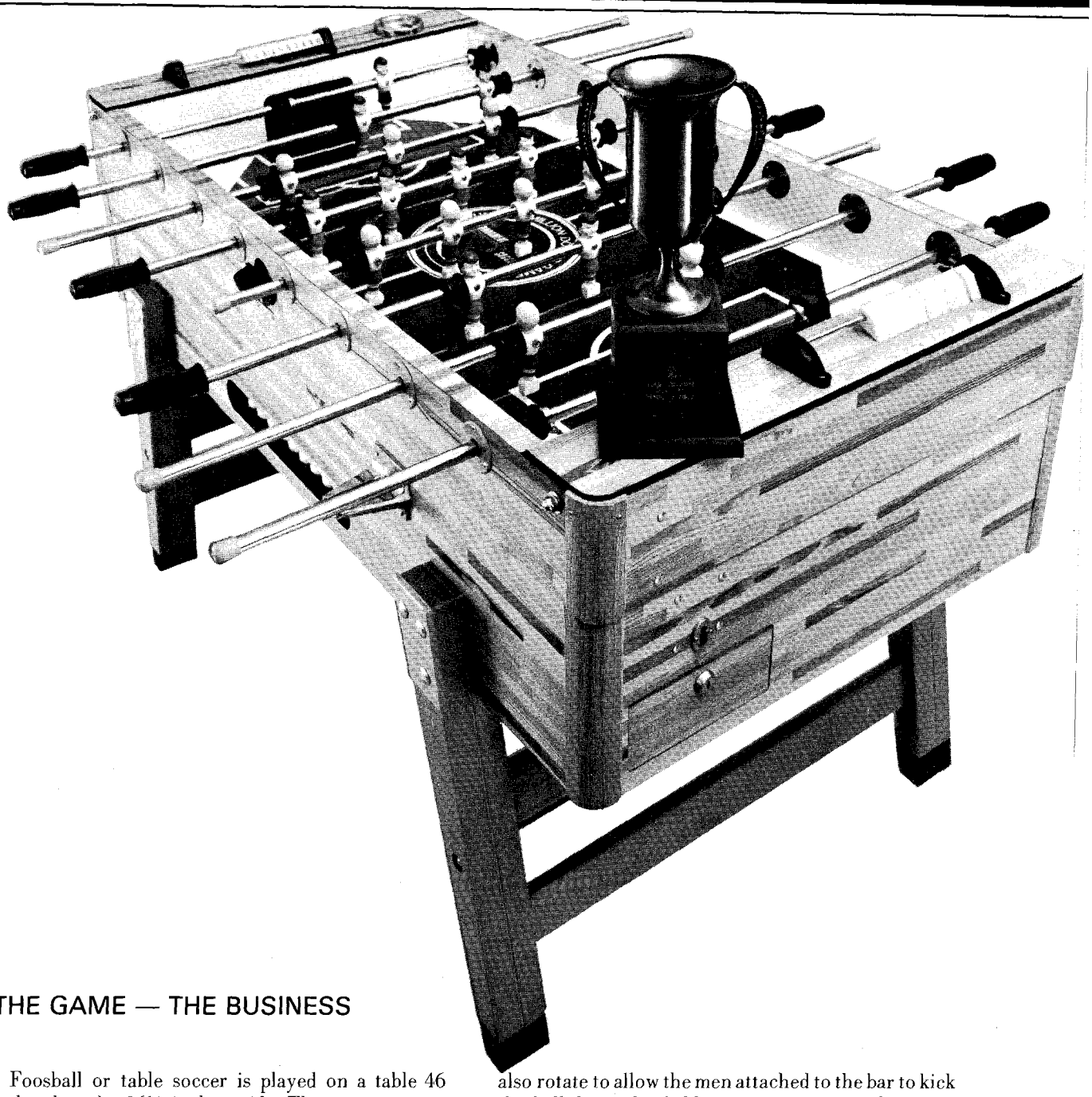

THE GAME — THE BUSINESS

Foosball or table soccer is played on a table 46 inches long by 26½ inches wide. There are twenty-two wooden or plastic men situated on eight metal bars running side to side through the table. There is a goal at each end of the table.

The game can be played by two or four players. Each side controls four metal bars with a total of eleven men on them. They are arranged so that there are five men on the middle bar, three men on the offensive bar in front of the middle men, two men on the defensive bar behind the middle men and a goalie alone on a bar. The arrangement of players is the same for both sides. Each of the metal bars has a handle on it, and the bars slide from side to side and also rotate to allow the men attached to the bar to kick the ball down the field or pass to one another.

The object of the game is to knock a hard plastic ball, slightly smaller than a ping pong ball, into the opposition's goal. In most games, the first side to score five goals wins the game. In tournament play, the winning player or team is usually the one which wins two out of three games.

Commercial foosball tables are coin operated. By depositing twenty-five cents in a slot, players release nine balls for play.

The size of the goal is an important element in the game. The type of surface on the table and the relative weight of the handles that support the wooden men

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are also important. At present there are a number of different types of foosball tables on the market. In what is sometimes known as the "Texas style" foosball table, the goal may be as wide as nine inches. Many tavern owners and foosball-hall proprietors prefer tables with wide goals because games played on these tables are played in a shorter time than those played on tables with smaller goals. It's easier to score goals when the goals are big. The shorter the game time, the more games played in a day. The more games played, the more quarters inserted in the coin slots.

Tournament Soccer brand tables have narrow goals, a little over seven inches wide. They have smooth, fast surfaces and solid metal rods holding the players. Rods for one table weigh approximately sixty-five pounds. These qualities make for a more skillful, precise, scientific game than is generally played on the "Texas style" tables. For this reason, players from the southwest and northeast parts of the country, where tables other than Tournament Soccer brand tables are popular, often find it difficult to adjust to Tournament Soccer playing conditions.

In 1975 and 1976 Tournament Soccer brand tables' promotional teams, under the direction of a man named Cal Rogers and the inspiration of a man named Lee Peppard, have run nation-wide tournaments featuring winning purses that begin to approach the size of those given in professional tennis competition.

Lee Peppard is top man at United Financial Corporation, the company that arranges for distribution of Tournament Soccer brand tables after they arrive in this country from Taiwan, where they are manufactured. Cal Rogers is top man of Coin Sports, Incorporated, a promotional arm of United Financial Corporation.

In 1976 Rogers ran promotional tournaments with purses totaling $375,000. The December Florida Sunshine Open, for example, had top money of $25,000, as did the Salt Lake City October tournament and the March tournament in Columbus, Ohio. The $125,000 Minneapolis Nationals held Labor Day in Minneapolis was the climax of the tournament schedule this year. Rogers has announced that the 1977 tournament schedule will have a total purse of at least one-half million dollars.

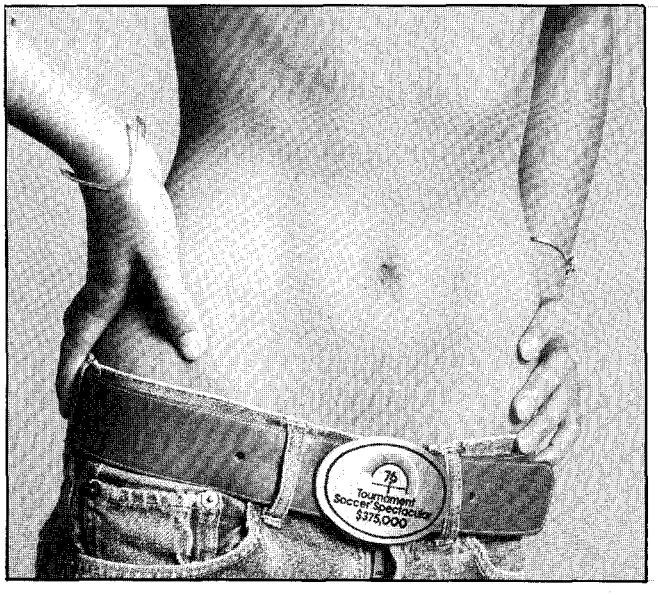
All Tournament Soccer tournaments are held in major hotels and are conducted under the supervison of The World Table Soccer Association.

The 1975 and 1976 Tournament Soccer tournaments across the country have caused foosball players everywhere to put pressure on tavern owners and foosball-hall owners to buy and install Tournament Soccer brand tables. Sales to individual buyers for play and practice at home have increased dramatically in the past two years. Though foosball is a pastime and a would-be sport, it is also becoming a big and profitable business.

"You know how I feel when I score a goal?" Billy is talking to me about his philosophy of play. A small crowd has gathered around us and Billy is talking loudly. He is obviously enjoying himself. "I feel just like I used to when I played line backer and some big guy'd come through a hole in the line and I'd hit him straight on, clean. You know that feeling? There isn't nothing else like it in the world. That's how I feel when I make a goal in foosball. Course I can't play football anymore because of the concussions, but foosball's just as much a sport as football. Maybe more. Boy, I love this sport. Boy, that's why I feel so bad about gettin' old." And Billy looks straight at me and smiles a totally innocent smile. For a minute I can't help but agree that foosball *is* a sport just like football.

Forty-two teams have entered the Rosedale tournament today. They are mostly young men, a few girls. Nobody looks over thirty. Each player paid a five dollar entry fee for a chance in the double elimination play. Each player will also contribute to the twenty-five cents that must be inserted in the coin slot in the machine in order to release the nine balls needed for a game. Twelve of the players will take away prizes: guaranteed seventy-five dollar entry fee certificates for the Grand One Hundred and Twenty-Five Thousand Dollar Minneapolis World Championship next month.

"Do you guys realize that some of the players here today are real pros? Some of them played in Denver last year." Jody, plump in a black denim jump suit, is selling foosball T-shirts and belt buckles from a platform at one end of the court. She is also making change for players who need quarters and right now she is talking to two ten-year-old boys who have wandered over here to see what is going on. "If you look around you might see Billy Sumption. I think he's here." The boys are impressed. They look around at the twenty-four tables and the players, the cool nerveless



Belt buckles and T-shirts are heavy items in the promotion of foosball in general and Tournament Soccer type foosball in particular. Wearing a buckle and an official T-shirt has become a kind of status symbol among members of the foosball cult.

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veterans of Denver and other tournaments wearing thin leather golf gloves, the better to grasp the handles, wearing TOURNAMENT SOCCER SPECTACULAR T-shirts. The two boys are not certain which ones are the real pros. They all look good. The boys look like they'd like to get their feet wet.

Billy and his doubles partner, Doug, have entered the Rosedale tournament. They are about ready to play a fooser called Squirrel and his partner, Ken, in the winner's bracket. Billy plays forward, wearing a black golf glove on one hand and a red golf glove on the other. "I wear out two gloves every day in a tournament," Billy says. "Gloves give me a better grip on the handles, but you've got to get the thin gloves. Sometimes before I buy my gloves I go through a stack of hundreds of golf gloves just to find the ones that are thin enough."

He flicks a few practice balls in the goal, then sprays the rubber handle of the rods with silicon spray. He begins jumping up and down clapping his hands over his head while he jumps. He stops and turns and says, "I'm never self-conscious about what I do when I play. I'll do anything. Except, of course, I won't do anything unsportsmanlike, like talkin' at the team across the table. I won't do that. Last year in the Denver Nationals I won the most sportsmanlike player award. What I mean is I'm not self-conscious about doin' things when I play and make my shots or when I warm up. You know where I learned that? I was at a baseball game with this fellow from France who designs dirigibles. Not the kind that blow up but the kind with helium. And he didn't know anything about baseball. The pitcher wound up and threw the ball and the French guy said to me, 'Did you see him raise his foot over his head?' I told him, 'Wait, you're lookin' at the wrong thing. That guy's *throwin*' the ball.' And then the pitcher threw again and the guy said it was real funny how the player had his foot over his head again. And that made me realize that any sport looks funny to somebody who doesn't know what's goin' on. And I thought then, foosball's a real sport, just like baseball. So I'm never self-conscious." He begins jumping up and down and clapping his hands again.

The game begins. Squirrel passes the ball up to Ken, his forward. Doug is playing goalie, concentrating, defending his goal. All four players are bent over the table, intent. Maybe fifty people are gathered in a circle around the table, watching. There is absolute silence. Suddenly Ken wrenches the handle of his three man rod and there is a CRACK as the ball goes past Doug's goalie and right on into the goal. Though I am standing right beside the table, right behind the goal, I don't see the movement on the table. Ken shoots the ball faster than I can follow it. All I see is a smooth rythmic motion of his whole body as he dribbles the ball from one man on his three man stick to another man on the stick and then a quick lurch as he twists the handle and his center man slams the ball past the goalie and into the goal.

THE FIVE MAN ROD: A view of the five man rod in the center of the foosball table. The dark circle near the far end of the rod is the hole in the middle of the table through which the foosball is dropped to start play.

"Nice shot," says a fat fooser in a denim jacket and faded jeans, his hands in his pockets, standing next to me. He is wearing a necklace, pieces of wood strung along a cord.

"What's the necklace?" I ask Jody.

"Feet. Feet of all the foosball men he's broken. He likes to hit the ball hard and every now and then he'll break a man in half, that's how hard he hits the ball. So he saves the feet from the pieces he's broke. He's got about twenty feet on that necklace. He's real proud of it."

Now Billy and Doug have tied up the game 1-1. Squirrel and Ken have called time out. Billy and Doug turn away from the table and Billy puts his hand on Doug's shoulder; they are whispering strategy.

"Almost nothing ever happens in a foosball game by accident," Billy had told me earlier. "You have to think all the time—what's the strategy? What are the percentages? It's like chess, only you have to think faster. People who see this sport the first time think it's all luck, just pushin' a ball around till it goes in the goal. But they don't know what's goin' on. I'd bet that ninety-nine percent of the goals scored in a tournament are planned way in advance. This sport's a real science."

I go over to the T-shirt counter with Jody. TOURNAMENT SOCCER SPECTACULAR T-shirts come in a variety of styles and cost about seven dollars. The most popular style is called a Wallace Beery and looks like the underwear jersey of an old time baseball player, the kind with buttons up the front. Right now business is slack and Jody likes to talk.

"My introduction to foosball was kind of dramatic," Jody says. "When Kirk and I moved up here from Texas I didn't know a thing about this sport. I'd never even seen a table.

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Well, we moved in with Tom and his girl friend. Tom didn't do anything but play foosball. All day. Half the night. That's all he did. He had a table there in the apartment, and that apartment was real small, only three rooms. Tom and his doubles partner practiced on that table all day every day for six weeks. Twelve hours a day. Of course I'm not complaining. They were real good to Kirk and I, but the noise all day, it was just something I hadn't known before. See, they were getting ready for the Denver Nationals and I'd never seen anything like it. Now it don't seem so strange to me anymore. I guess I've got used to being around people who don't do anything else, just play foosball. I bet at least one-half of the people here today in the tournament don't do anything but play foosball."

"This here's Jane. She plays a whole lot of foosball."

Jane is twenty but looks maybe twelve. She has long straight blond hair, wears glasses, is thin and stooped.

"Hi, Jane. What do you do when you aren't playing foosball?"

"Nothin'. There ain't much time when I'm not playin'."

"You play foosball all the time?"

"Yeah. I guess you could say that."

"Well, you could do worse stuff."

"Yeah. Like workin'."

THE SPORT

"The fact is that table soccer has all the elements of a truly legitimate major sport—strategies, highly refined techniques, and an emphasis on speed, reflexes and coordination. This makes table soccer enjoyable not only as light entertainment but also as aggressive competition, susceptible to high degrees of skill....If nothing else, we need to show the people who come out to watch (foosball tournaments) that what they are seeing is a group of athletes, whether amateur or professional, not a rock festival or a bunch of disheveled kids, but a sporting event."

Jim Congdon, 1976 President
World Table Soccer Association

Jim Congdon is to foosball what Bowie Kuhn is to baseball. The World Table Soccer Association, an organization that has its roots somewhere in the minds of Cal Rogers and Lee Peppard, has acted as player representative and general coordinator of events for foosball activities during the past two or three years. The WTSA sets the official rules for tournaments, provides officials for tournaments, establishes and enforces dress codes for players, and publishes *Foos Noos*, the official publication for the sport.

Officials of the WTSA, promoters and distributors of foosball equipment (particularly Tournament Soccer brand equipment) and devoted players have been working steadily the past few years to get foosball accepted as a legitimate sport and foosers looked on as athletes. They want the game to lose its tavern-pool hall image and come out of the smoke into America's living rooms, gymnasiums and recreation centers. They are disturbed when foosball is talked of as if it were some kind of pinball game. They shy away from comparisons between foosball and pool. They prefer to compare foosball with tennis, football, baseball, hockey, and sometimes even skiing. They were elated when in September, 1975, *Sports Illustrated* magazine carried a full one and one-half page article on the Denver Nationals under the headline, "A real first-class professional sport." A year later foosball sport promoters were still distributing copies of this issue of *Sports Illustrated* to anyone who would take one.

As a professional sport, foosball has a long way to go to catch up with professional tennis or football. As yet there are no Jimmy Connors' or Chris Everts in foosball. The February 1976 issue of *Foos Noos* listed the names of 137 foosers who had earned more than $200 playing in Tournament Soccer sponsored tournaments in 1975. The leading money winner, Dan Kaiser, had won almost fifteen thousand dollars. Only fourteen players had won more than five thousand dollars. Billy Sumption was fifteenth with $4,725. The figures do not include the results of the 1976 Nationals in which $125,000 was divided among players. And the figures do not include winnings from tournaments sponsored by organizations other than Tournament Soccer promotional organizations. But even if these figures were added, the amount of money a good professional can earn playing foosball these days is generally below a living wage.

Confronted with these facts, people like Jim Congdon reply that just a very few years ago professional tennis was not a very profitable occupation in this country. And professional football was here for many years before it achieved its comfortable affluence. Foosball, Congdon and Sumption and Rogers say, has a huge professional future. It is clear they believe in the game as sport; they have literally staked their lives on it. On the other hand, some old timers remember that there was a serious effort made in the 1930s to professionalize the art of yo-yoing. Professional yo-yo experts toured the country giving exhibitions and organizing tournaments. For a time it was a minor commercial success. But something happened.

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ARE YOU WITH THE SOCCER?

It's September 3rd at nine p.m. and I'm in the airport limousine, the only passenger on this run.

"Radisson South."

"You going to the Radisson South? They got all those kids over there. Man, they got kids from all over. Some of them got money, too. They've been flying in here all day from all over the country. That hotel is full of kids."

At the desk I tell a black-suited, baby-faced, curly-haired clerk that I have a reservation.

"Are you with the soccer?"

"Yes."

"Will you please step over here. Mr. Phander will take care of you. Your account."

"My account? You want me to pay in advance?"

"You're with the soccer? I'm afraid we'll have to ask you to pay in advance. You see, last year in Denver some of the soccer people spent all of their money in the machines and didn't have enough left to pay the hotel."

"But I'm not a fooser. I'm a writer. I'm writing a story on the tournament. Do you always ask people to pay in advance?"

"That's $70.40 with tax. The special soccer tournament rate. No, we don't always ask for payment in advance. I guess you could say this is kind of discrimination. But you're with the soccer, it's hotel policy."

The bellboy takes me to room 1510. Going down the hall on the fifteenth floor, I can smell the rich sweet smoke of some very good dope.

"You could get high just standing out here."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Grass. It smells good."

"I wouldn't know about that, sir. I'd think it's dangerous."

> "...Anybody who tells you he's running a money tournament because he loves the players is lying. I'm not going to kid you, either. As I've said before, tournament operations are a method of marketing—just as ads are. It's just our prime method of promoting our product."
>
> Lee Peppard, Interview
> *Replay Magazine,* Feb. 1976

This is Saturday, Labor Day Weekend, in the Great Hall of the Radisson South Hotel in Minneapolis. The Great Hall is full of fooser-athletes, here for the 1976 Minneapolis Nationals, the 5th Annual Fellowship of Foos, the fabled $125,000 Tournament Soccer Spectacular World Championship that is the superbowl of the foosball world.

Kirk McKennon and Jody are here. Cal Rogers and his promo staff from Coin Sports, Inc., in Seattle have come down to organize the tournament. Jim Congdon, President of WTSA, has come up from Texas to supervise and officiate. Lee Peppard, the money behind the tournament, is here. Representatives from the company in Taiwan that manufactures Tournament Soccer brand tables are here.

THE NEGLECTED WEAPON

By Lowell Ford

You would think he was an outcast the way he's ignored. Perhaps he has a social disease....Well, it's time for the goalie to demand recognition as an offensive weapon. With a bit of concentration and practice the goalie can become an asset in your scoring potential. Here are some ways to give your goalie new status with a varied straight shot and a bank.

The goalie's straight shots are generally too straight. Right down the gut. Any seasoned player will pick it all too easily. A slight variation will get you past the front men to the far corner of the opponent's goal. Block off half the goal with a piece of plywood or formica and repeat shooting until you can bang in ten in a row. Do this same exercise by shooting across court from the other side. The more consistent you get, close the hole smaller and smaller....

Practice, practice, practice, then slip it into a game to take the competitive edge.

Foos Noos
The Official Magazine of the WTSA
July, 1975

There are rumors that reporters and photographers from *Sports Illustrated* and CBS news are here. And maybe two thousand fooser-athletes are here from all over the United States and Canada.

Here in the Great Hall, Cal Rogers and his staff have installed one hundred foosball tables, one hundred tables lined up in rows of twenty under the four huge crystal chandeliers that now seem delicately incongruous with the action on the floor. Outside in the lobby are twenty-eight more tables and another ten or twelve tables are sitting in a kind of cafeteria alcove to the Great Hall. All of these foosers and tables fill the hall, pack it with a constant restless stream of movement around the hundred solid islands. The speaker's stand, which is the microphone center of action for the tournament, is at the far end of the room. Beside it is the counter where the athletes can buy fooser T-shirts and gloves and belt buckles and silicon spray.

The room is heavy with the clattering CRACK of forty or fifty games in progress. The players are sort of milling around, putting quarters into coin chutes, hitting a few shots, warming up, watching the speaker's stand where the opening ceremony will begin any minute. There is an informal, relaxed, friendly feeling about all of this. The crowd flows in and out of the hall in a constant stream; outside it grows and waits before the elevators and when an elevator arrives, out come six or eight more foosers and in go another bunch to go back upstairs for their gloves or their hats.

"Hey, do you live around here?"

"Yeah. Why?"

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The tension of a tournament game is apparent in the faces of these spectators at the World Championship Tournament Soccer Spectacular held in Minneapolis in September. These people are watching the fabled Texas mixed doubles team of Gary Pfeil and Lori Schranz go down in defeat to two relative newcomers, Rick Beberg and Bev Froom, from California and Oregon.

THE GREAT HALL: A portion of the Great Hall of the Radisson South hotel in Minneapolis, Labor Day Weekend, 1976. One hundred foosball tables have been set up in the hall and over two thousand foosers have come to play. (Right)

"Where's a good place to eat in this town?"

"Uptown, it's about seven miles from here, there's a Chinese restaurant."

"How far'd you say it was?"

"Seven or eight miles I guess. It's uptown."

"That's too far. See, we drove here from Saint Louis in this old car and we gotta be careful not to drive it too far while we're here because it's got to get us back home."

Most of the fooser-athletes in the Great Hall are young, maybe in their early twenties. They look as though they've spent most of the summer indoors; not much sun tan, pale. They all seem to stand a little stooped; they've been practicing for this tournament since January. They are all clean and neat. They all know about Jim Congdon's Dress Code and they don't want to take a chance of breaking it and losing points or being fined or even, my God!, being disqualified. So they are wearing shoes and the girls are wearing blouses instead of halters and the jeans are clean and most of the T-shirts have collars.

WORLD TABLE SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Office of the President

As you read the attached Dress Code you will notice frequent references to the "General guidelines of good taste." This subject of what is in good taste and what is not is admittedly open to debate, but you should be aware that any final decisions in these matters will be in the hands of special WTSA committees at the World Championships. No appeal will be possible once any decision is made. So if you have any doubts as to whether a certain article of clothing of yours will be acceptable, leave it at home and bring something a little nicer.

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For fooser-athletes, lettered T-shirts are status symbols. They are badges of origin and trophies from tournaments and moving advertising signs. Here the flow of T-shirt messages is awesome: PAVED WAVE; SKATEBOARD TRACK AND GAME, COCOA, FLORIDA; POISON APPLE, WATERLOO, IOWA; CUE AND CHALK, WEST SENECA, NEW YORK; BELLTREES INN, GODFREY, ILLINOIS; B & W DISTRIBUTING, KANSAS CITY; BEVERLY PARK TAVERN, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON; THE MONASTERY, BRIDAL VEIL, OREGON; FUNWAY FREEWAY, COLUMBUS, OHIO; CHAMPION GLOVE, DES MOINES, IOWA; EARTHQUAKE McGOON'S SALOON, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS; GAP, UNION GAP, CALIFORNIA; SIERRA LOUNGE, SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI; HALFWAY, ATLANTIC MINES, MICHIGAN; FILTHY McNASTY'S BOOZE PARLOR, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS; FAMILY REC CENTER, SAINT PAUL; NOWHERE TAVERN, MEDFORD, OREGON; STUDS FOOS SHOP, TAMPA, FLORIDA.

"We are the first people in the coin industry who have successfully keyed into who the consumer is. The consumer is not the distributor. The consumer is not the operator. The consumer is the kid who puts the quarter in the piece of equipment. You want to talk about what makes tournament soccer unique? It's that realization. It's not only consumer marketing but it's also consumer education. When you go to one of our table soccer tournaments and sit around our hospitality suite with a group of players, distributors and operators, the conversation you'll hear will be about what we've educated the player to know."

Lee Peppard, Interview
Replay Magazine, Feb. 1976

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At 12:30 the opening ceremony begins. Steve Montgomery, public relations man, steps to the microphone. He is tall, clean, self-confident. He is a young Bert Parks with a totally vacant smile. Like all of Cal Rogers' promo men, Montgomery wears a casual blue sport jacket, just the right note to remind the fooser-athletes that this is a serious sporting event and not a rock festival. Montgomery welcomes everybody. The athletes are in good spirits; they clap enthusiastically.

Montgomery introduces Gary Paulack, a Minneapolis fooser-athlete who won $1,260 in tournament play in 1975 and who has written a song about foosball. Much applause. Gary, moustache and beard, Hawaiian sport shirt, modest smile, sits down and begins the song on his guitar. He sings. The lyrics are about the thrill of winning the game, going right to the top, about the fun, about the legendary athletes of this sport, some of whom are right here in this Great Hall. The song ends with a list of the fabled names of the sport, names like Gary Pfeil and Ken Rivera and Lori Schranz and Brent Bednar and Karin Gilliland and Billy Sumption and Tom Hansen and Dan Kaiser, just like Tex Ritter's litany of country singers at the end of "I Dreamed of a Hillbilly Heaven." The crowd loves it. The athletes clap and whistle and cheer.

Then a firm and gentle lecture on the dress code. "We're all trying to get respect for foosball as a REAL SPORT. And the only way we can do that is for all of you to look right. I'm proud of the way you are all behaving here at this big hotel—the management of the hotel says it has no complaints at all, no complaints—but I want to remind you again to keep right on with the dress code. Just remember this, we're planning tournaments in the biggest hotels in the country and you've got to keep up our image. Next month we've got a big tournament coming up in the Playboy Towers in Chicago. We've never been able to get in the Playboy Towers before, but now they've said yes, and you've got to help us by keeping up the good work and following the dress code. It's up to you players to help us so that we can keep having these big tournaments and giving away all this money." The athletes clap good-naturedly for the dress code.

Now Lee Peppard comes to the microphone. Short, stocky, wearing a blue sport coat exactly like Montgomery's. "I want to say that when I was out there last night taking registrations for this tournament I heard some of the players complaining about the price of the entry fee. I was getting some heavy feedback about the entry fee, some of you players were saying it was too high. I want you to know that Tournament Soccer is giving away right here this weekend one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars and by the time we finish all our expenses for holding this tournament we'll have spent more than one hundred and sixty thousand dollars. We brought twelve men down here from Seattle just to run this tournament; there isn't anybody left in the Washington office except the office girl. Things like that cost money. We won't take in nearly as much money as we spend here holding this tournament for you players." The players clap. Some of them cheer. "So I want to clear that up. There's no sense in having hard feelings. We have to work together and we're going to get foosball recognized as a real sport, just like football."

Applause. Cheers.

Then there is a tribute to *Sports Illustrated* for having called foosball a "real first-class professional sport." "*Sports Illustrated* is back again this year and we hope they give us even bigger and better coverage."

Finally Cal Rogers has one last message for the players. He walks to the side of the stage and points to a green Porsche 911S Targa parked on the floor. "Next year in our tournament here in Minneapolis we are going to give away a Porsche just like that one. It's a 911S Targa and that's an eighteen thousand dollar prize. Some player is going to drive it away next year. So you see we've got lots of things coming up in the future for you players in this great sport." The players try to get a look at the Porsche. They push toward the stage. They whistle.

The ceremony is over and it's time for action. The blue-jacketed promo man at the microphone begins to call out the matches—team by team, name by name. "Edge against Mr. J's, table thirty-six....Farmer's Daughter and Lori, table twenty-two....Don and Don against Poison Dart, table twelve...." And all at once every table in the Great Hall is in action with concentrating fooser-athletes stooped, going for goals.

Cal Rogers' promotion team has organized the Minneapolis Nationals according to a complex set of classifications and events that are intended to give novice players a chance at some of the prize money and, in general, to spread the money around to as many players as possible. Play is divided into three classes. Each class is divided into four categories.

Championship Class
(For players who have won over a specified sum of money in 1975.)

- **Open Doubles**
  First prize $20,000. Twenty-three additional money winners.
- **Mixed Doubles**
  First prize $7000. Eleven additional money winners.
- **Singles**
  First prize $7000. Eleven additional money winners.
- **Women's Doubles**
  First prize $2000. Seven additional money winners.

The novice class organization is similar except that the prizes and number of winners are smaller. The novice class open doubles first prize, for example, is $1500. The novice women's doubles first prize in $250 and there are only seven additional money prizes.

The third class is the "2nd Chance Class" and is for players who have lost twice in the regular double elimination competition and want to stay and try again. Prizes are roughly the same as prizes in the novice class competition.

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There is also a small competition for players seventeen years old and younger.

Entry fees for the events vary from class to class. In the championship class, most entry fees are $75 per player which, of course, means $150 a team. In the novice class, fees average $25 per player. In addition to payment of the entry fees, players must be prepared to insert a quarter in the foosball table coin chute for every nine balls played in tournament competition. Every table here in the Great Hall and outside in the lobby and in the cafeteria to the side is a coin operated machine.

For some fooser-athletes who have traveled long distances to get to the tournament and who want to stay at this expensive hotel where the tournament is being held, entry fees and playing quarters can be problems.

Sponsorship

If the expense of the trip is troubling you, try convincing your favorite foosplace to back you in return for wearing their shirt and having your team's matches called by their name. They can be guaranteed that every player there will hear at least two advertisements about their place. Since we will certainly have national exposure on TV and in magazines, your sponsor will have a good shot at national exposure of his location.

No matter what skill level you have, the air time and space is valuable. You're offering that location a once-a-year chance to put his name in the eyes and ears of every foosball player in the country—for him, it's a good investment and it could lighten the load on you.

—from a promotion brochure distributed by Coin Sports to thousands of foosball players on the company's mailing list approximately two months before the tournament.

Fourteen to eighteen hours a day, play continues in the Great Hall. There is a constant flow of foosers in and out of the doors, out into the lobby and on to the elevators that never stop running, day and night. There is an incredible amount of human motion, restless energy. But with all the movement, the fooser-athletes are a strangely quiet crowd. Except for the public address system's constant drone of names and tables and the CRACK of competition at the tables themselves, the Great Hall is almost quiet. Apparently fooser-athletes in competition are too concentrated to make loud noises.

Business in the hotel bar is slack, but by eight o'clock at night every soft drink machine on every one of the twenty floors of the hotel is empty. All of the ice has been taken from the ice machines. And always there is that lingering sweet smell of smoke in every corridor on every floor. On and on goes the voice on the PA system announcing still more and more matches, and up and down go the elevators without a rest, and as hours become days, perhaps by Sunday afternoon, you can begin to notice feelings changing with passengers in the elevators. Dejected, quiet fooser-athletes who have lost in the double elimination play stare at the floor.

Billy Sumption gets in the elevator. "How'd you do, Billy?" He smiles a weak grin. Embarrassed. "Boy, I'm just not up for this one."

And fooser-athletes still in there with a chance begin to show the pressure, become thoughtful, map strategy, think on the elevator between floors. Only snatches of conversation, unrequited utterances. "Anybody here got a left-handed glove? They've run out of them at the booth downstairs." No answer. Edgy.

By 10:15 Sunday night some critical matches have been set. Red Eye and Advantage Ind. from California and Oregon are scheduled to meet Lucky from Dallas. This is a big match, semi-finals mixed doubles. Red Eye and Advantage are Rick Beberg and Bev Froom. Lucky is,—well, everybody in the Great Hall knows that Lucky is the name Gary Pfeil uses in every tournament. Tonight Lucky is Gary Pfeil and his long time partner Lori Schranz.

Gary is probably the best known player in the tournament, probably the best known player in North America. Up from Dallas for the tournament, Gary is not much liked in the north country, but as Jim Congdon says, "Gary may not be liked up here but he's feared." Legends have sprung up about Gary and the shots he has developed that cannot be blocked and the tournaments he has won, always wearing a solid black T-shirt with no lettering, no sponsor. When Gary walks around the Great Hall, young fooser-athletes follow at a respectful distance.

Gary is thirty-one years old. It is rumored that his family is very wealthy. He is beginning to get thick around the middle. The cuffs of his pants are two inches off the floor. He wears white socks. Soft-spoken, self-assured, he carries his fame gently and with dignity. Before he became interested in foosball, he was a professional bowler and played a great deal of pool. I ask him if he feels uncomfortable up here playing in Minnesota where the players don't have much love for fooser-athletes from Texas.

"I'm not up here to talk to friends or smile at people or socialize in some bar. I'm here to play. I take tournaments seriously. After the tournament is over it's OK to be social if you want, but right now it's strictly the game."

"Do you think foosball has a future as a professional sport?"

"I do. I absolutely do. There's a great future for this sport. Foosball requires skill, technique and lots of strategy. There's a lot of thinking that goes into this game. It's catching on everywhere across the country and it is definitely going to be a major sport. It's got a tremendous future."

"You told me you were thirty-one. Are you getting too old for this sport? Are your reflexes slowing down?"

"I wouldn't say my reflexes are slowing down. Anyway, I don't think reflexes are as important in this sport as some

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other things. Execution's the thing, the ability to analyze a situation and execute the right play. I've heard people say that foosball is mostly luck. They talk about all this random motion on the table, the way the ball rolls around out of control, they think. With a team that has good execution there's almost no random motion at all. You know how you can prove that? Simple. A good team with good execution will beat a sloppy team with lots of luck one-hundred percent of the time."

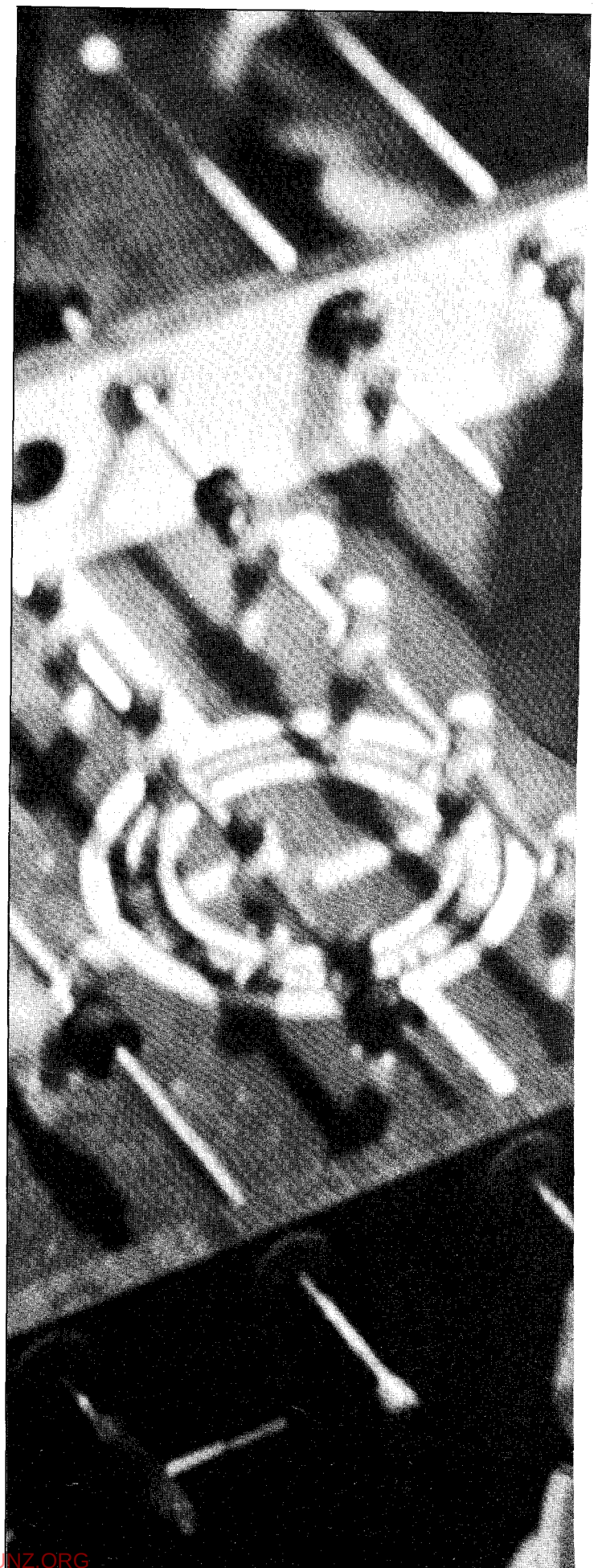
"How do Texas players feel about coming up here and playing on Tournament Soccer brand tables?"

"Well, it's kind of rough for some of them. See, there's only one Tournament Soccer brand table in a public place in Dallas. All the other places have some other brand table. And that doesn't give the Texas players the chance to practice the way they ought to. Sure, some of us have our own Tournament Soccer tables. There's a few guys, eight or ten of us around Dallas, have our own tables. I've got one at home. But still, we just end up playing each other most of the time. Anyway, I'm not worried. We're doing OK here this year."

Gary puts the ball on the table in front of an end man on the five man rod. Patiently he explains that if the ball is We walk over to a line of foosball tables. Two fooser-athletes are playing at a table next to a vacant table. One of the players has just put a quarter in the coin chute and released nine balls. Gary walks over to the table, reaches his hand in the bin and takes out one of the balls. The two players look up frowning to see who is bothering their table, who is taking their ball. They see it is Gary Pfeil. They nod at us and go back to their game.

Gary puts the ball on the table in front on an end man on the five man rod. Patiently he explains that if the ball is motionless in this position it is not humanly possible for an opponent to react fast enough to keep the five man line man from passing the ball on to his three man line. It is a matter of angles and timing. "So the Association outlawed that shot last year. It's taken me a while to recover. A lot of my game used to be based on that shot." He takes the ball off the table and tosses it back in the bin. The other two players, concentrating, ignore us.

Lori Schranz, Gary's partner in Lucky, is a tiny, impassive, Texas brunette just over twenty years old who ranked sixteenth in the nation in Tournament Soccer winnings in 1975. She is generally acknowledged as one of the two or three best woman-goalies in the nation. "One thing about Lori and me playing together," Gary says, "we don't show any emotion. We plan it that way. Emotion just lets the other team know they're getting to you. So we don't say anything, whether we win or lose. You know there's nothing I like better than to beat one of these north teams that have those loud-mouthed players making a lot of noise."



WINNERS: Brent Bednar (left) and Mike Belz (right), both of Minneapolis, celebrate seconds after winning the open doubles championship for 1976. Both players received checks for $10,000 for their victory. The open doubles category is the richest of all divisions in the Tournament Soccer Spectacular.

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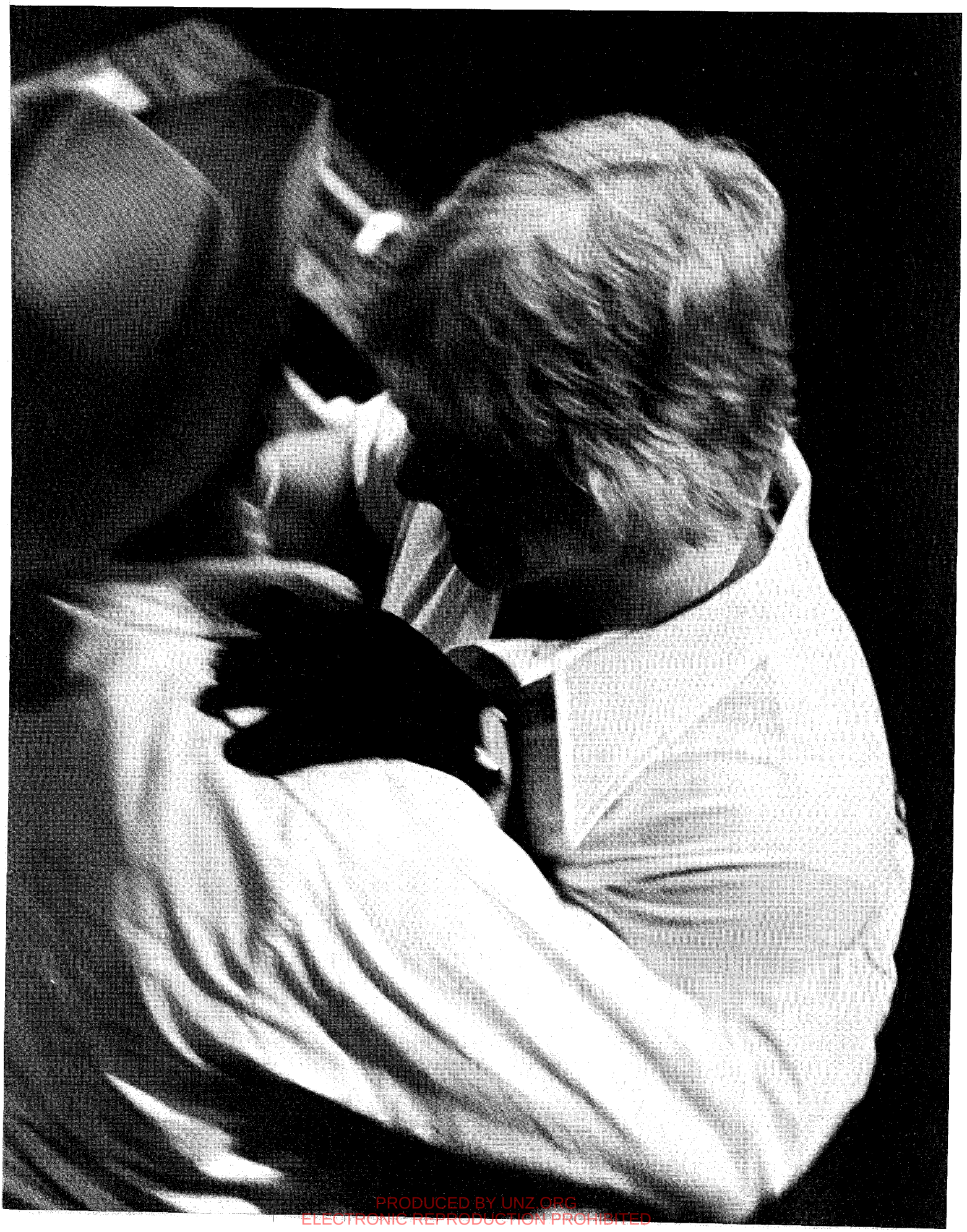
ARE YOU WITH THE SOCCER?



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Bleachers have been erected around two foosball tables at one end of the Great Hall. Crucial matches are played on these tables. Maybe a hundred people are in the bleachers watching Lori and Gary and Rick and Bev get ready for the semi-final match. Although Rick and Bev have experience, Gary and Lori are heavily favored to win. I'm sitting in the bleachers with Jim Congdon, WTSA president. "For years Gary and Lori dominated foosball in the south," he says. "They're probably the best all around mixed doubles team in the history of the sport."

Rick drops a quarter in the coin chute releasing nine white balls. The match begins.

Jim Congdon is not one of the fooser-athletes who spends all of his time playing this sport. He is a Northwestern University graduate in engineering who works as a project supervisor for a Texas architectural company. Perhaps thirty years old, he is not tall but he's very solid looking. He is working on a degree in law at a university in Houston; the degree will help him untangle the complexities of architectural project management. He is an outspoken, energetic and ambitious man. "I don't know exactly when I really got into foosball," he says. "I remember it was the time when I was taking some law courses a few years ago and I started stopping by this bar on the way home and pretty soon I was playing a lot of foosball there. After a while, foosball got to be more important to me than studying law so I quit and got into the foosball scene right then. I wasn't ever very good at it and pretty soon I got into the promotion end of the sport. I ran a few tournaments around Dallas. I knew Cal Rogers when he lived in Texas and so when he got the idea for a World Table Soccer Association he asked me to help. I'm president this year, but only for one year. And now I'm back studying law. I love foosball, though."

I ask him if he thinks foosball is a real sport, like tennis.

"No question about it, this game is definitely a real sport and the players are real athletes. I've written that in *Foos Noos* and said it everywhere else people will listen to me. And sure, it's like tennis. I'm the guy who compared foosball and tennis in the first place. In tennis you have different kinds of courts—grass, artificial surface, clay. The players have to adjust to the different courts. Well, in foosball it's the same kind of thing. There are different brands of tables and a player has to adjust to the difference."

I ask him what he thinks of foosball as a business.

"Well, sure it's a business. So is baseball. I don't make any secret about my salary as president of WTSA. And I travel around officiating tournaments and I get paid for that. Sometimes I organize and run a tournament around home. I ran the 1976 twenty-thousand dollar Tornado Nationals in Dallas." Tornado is a copyrighted foosball table brand name like Tournament Soccer.

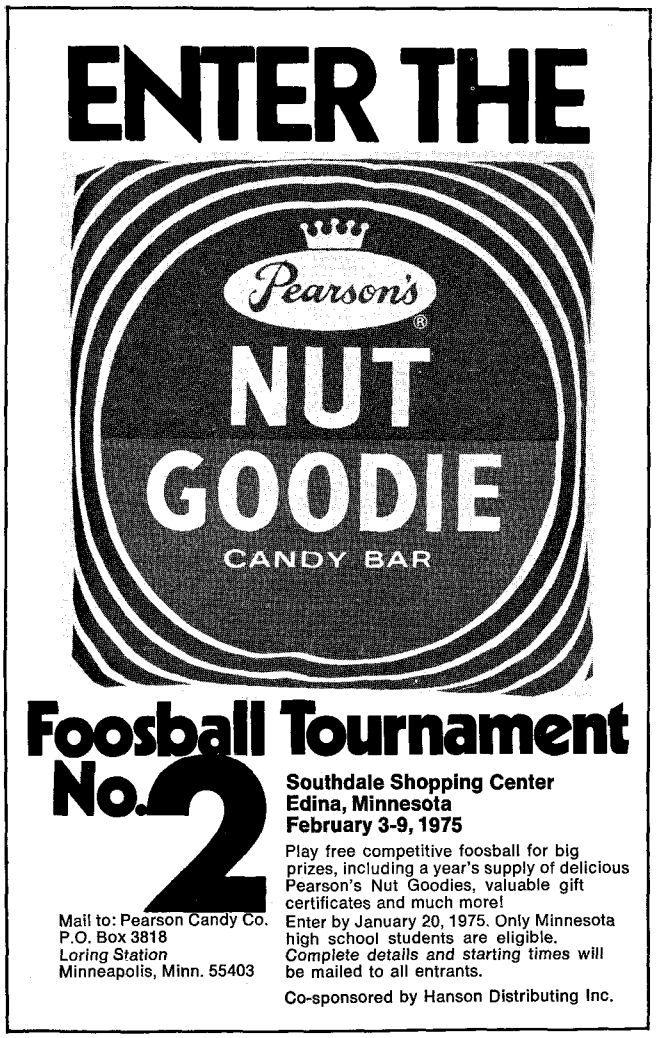
"Do the guys you work with at the architectural company think it's a little odd for a graduate engineer and a project supervisor to be spending his spare time fooling around with foosball?"

"I guess some of them do think it's a little strange. But they think it's kind of interesting, too, that I made enough money on just one tournament to make the down payment on my house."

In front of us, the match goes on. The score is tied, one game apiece. The third and deciding game has started. Gary and Lori are impassive, expressionless. Rick is bent over the table, intent. Bev is playing goalie, and when Gary gets the ball up to his three man line and dribbles the ball back and forth getting ready for a shot, Bev becomes almost a part of the table, crouching, her hands moving the defensive men in a kind of quivering spastic dance. Three times Gary gets the ball to his three man line; three times Bev's dancing defensive men pick off the ball and prevent a score. It is a brilliant piece of defensive play, but there is not the slightest hint of frustration on Gary's face.

Rick scores twice against Lori. Gary and Lori call time out and turn away to whisper strategy.

With the score 3 to 2 against Lucky, Gary gets another chance against Bev's quivering defense. "Watch how he dribbles that ball along his three man stick," Jim says to me. "He's getting ready for a kick shot. Almost impossible to block." Gary lurches and wrenches the handle of his three man stick. There is the familiar CRACK just after the little wooden man kicks the ball, but the tone of the CRACK is somehow wrong. Instead of the sound of the ball slamming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NUT
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CANDY BAR
Foosball Tournament
No. 2
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Play free competitive foosball for big prizes, including a year's supply of delicious Pearson's Nut Goodies, valuable gift certificates and much more!
Enter by January 20, 1975. Only Minnesota high school students are eligible.
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Announcement of a foosball tournament sponsored by the Pearson Candy Company. Tournaments—and prizes—are proliferating in the foosball world.

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into the goal it is the sound of the ball hitting Bev's goalie. The ball ricochets off her defensive man and rockets down to the other end of the table. It is almost impossible to believe that anybody could defense such a shot, but Bev's concentration is so great—look at that face—maybe she sees things the rest of us don't see.

Now it's up to Lori. Carefully, impassively, she sets her defense.

Lucky loses the match. It is a brilliant upset. Bev has played superb goalie. But the crowd in the bleachers doesn't clap much, even if the people from Texas did lose. Most of the spectators are fooser-athletes themselves and they came more to study the techniques and the strategy and the execution from a professional point of view than to cheer like mere spectators.

By Monday the flow of fooser-athletes through the doors has slowed. The elevators are idle much of the time. Most of the many losers have gone home. But the winners are still around for the finals, and there are spectators.

Outside the Great Hall, beyond the elevators, beyond the swimming pools, Kirk and Jody are entertaining buyers and foosball dignitaries in a cabana hospitality suite complete with a juke box and an endless supply of drinks. People come and go with talk of the finals and foosball gossip and trivia and rumor and business.

Someone says that Dan Kaiser has won the Championship Singles. The number one money winner has done it again and added another seven thousand dollars to his account.

Kirk talks about the Return of the Great Nut Goodie Tournament tournament he sponsored last year. "See, a lot of high school students were complaining because they wanted to play foosball and there wasn't any place for them. They couldn't go to the bars because they were too young. So we got together with Pearson Candy Company and ran this tournament for high school students only. We called the first one the Nut Goodie Foosball Tournament because the company makes Nut Goodie candy bars. It was dynamite. It practically got out of hand so many kids wanted to play. So Jody and I worked out a system for a bigger tournament and that was The Return of the Great Nut Goodie Tournament tournament and this time so many kids turned out we had to split the thing up to two locations and....Jody gave away twelve hundred T-shirts and she could probably have given away a lot more of them except...."

Lucky has taken third place in the Championship Mixed Doubles. Word is received at the cabana that Red Eye and Advantage have taken first. Rick Beberg and goalie Bev Froom.

There is talk about the foosball movie. "We're making this movie about foosball. I'll tell you, we took off the side of the table and shot some camera angles of the action right on the surface of the table. Lots of action there. Then we put a piece of plastic right behind the goal and shot through the plastic. You actually get the goalie-eye view of the ball coming right at you. It's terrific. And we've got a lot of footage of Billy shooting bank shots and trying to defense kick shots and things like that."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"See, it isn't finished yet. We haven't got the script written. But we hope we can get it in libraries and schools—like the movies about how to play football and soccer. They've got movies like that in libraries and schools. And we think we can get it on educational TV."

A very large man in a tight suit sits down beside me. He is holding a glass in his hand and he wants to talk. "Foosball's a lot like pool. I own a bar over in Wisconsin and I've got pool tables and foosball tables and I get about as much out of one as I do the other...."

It is reported in the cabana that Lori and Karin have won the Championship Women's Doubles. That's Lori Schranz and Karin Gililland. Like Lori, Karin is up from Texas and is a veteran. The win coupled with Lori's third place money in the mixed doubles event gives her at least $2500 for the tournament. Nobody in the cabana is surprised at Lori and Karin's win. They had been favored since the beginning.

"He's writing a book about foosball. The trouble with writing a book about this sport, though, is that the game is changing, advancing so fast everything is outdated before you can get it printed. A couple of years ago a guy wrote this book about foosball and now when people read it they just laugh because the sport has got so complicated and scientific the last few years everything in that book is old fashioned and funny. Now it's changing so fast nobody can keep up with it. I sure don't know what kind of book he could be writing that won't be out of date by next week."

"What do you think *Sports Illustrated* is going to say about this year's tournament? I heard they're going to give us at least twice as much space as we got last year...."

"Sure, there's a couple of records out about foosball. We've got one right over here on the juke box. You want to hear it? Actually, the words are kind of hard to understand, but...."

It is announced that Frenchmans I has won the big one, the Championship Doubles Open! Frenchmans I is Brent Bednar and Mike Belz, two eighteen year old fooser-athletes from Minneapolis, the ones who took second place last year in the Denver Nationals. Everybody was saying then they just needed a little more seasoning to become real champions:

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DORI KATZ

HIDING IN OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES

First my mind must be absolutely calm
like water in a well
or those back streets of childhood
unvisited for days but for the wind
moving a little dust from one stone to the next.
Then perhaps you might appear,
the four of you emerging in the street,
your faces ruddy from the unhampered wind. Now
you're in the house again, around the kitchen table;
father and son between the wife and daughter, and me,
I'm squatting in a corner, crying, still
the wild child it will take months to tame.
It's very quiet in the room, you're praying
upset by my display of grief.
Slowly the child leaves her corner to join you in your meal.
This time no one will drive up to the door
at midnight to give warning,
this time no one will have to hide in the attic;
if questioned, I'll simply close my eyes and disappear.

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Yes, my mind must be absolutely calm
to put myself back in your life
as the converted niece some dead friend gave you.
Remember the five of us kneeling in church, then strolling
through town like any other family there?
The five of us working in the fields,
my job to sit under the cherry trees, banging a pot
to scare the blackbirds from the boughs;
I scattered chicken feed and fetched the lambs.
After the Sunday meal, the father took me on his lap
to teach me Flemish songs and prayers.
And so it might have been, the little Jewish girl
you saved from a damnation worse than Buchenwald
would grow up one of yours. Instead, at night,
I walked into my sleep like Bluebeard's wife
going to that forbidden room where dolls,
their stuffing coming out,
stared at me with faces like my mother's,
and hanging by his hair, a man
who became my father, burned and revolved.
Afterwards, I'd cry for hours
calling my name, my own banned, yiddish name,
refusing the comfort of your crucifix.

Now when I try to find you, faceless figures
turn their back on me. A smell of lard cooking
and of incense surfaces then retreats.
Unreconciled to my recurrent dream,
I can't imagine seeing you staring from streetcars
rattling uphill, or queuing up at banks
or waving from a boat going to America.
Since you won't budge, I am the one who must go back
after so many years to those deserted streets,
find your house, knock on the door and ask to be taken in.

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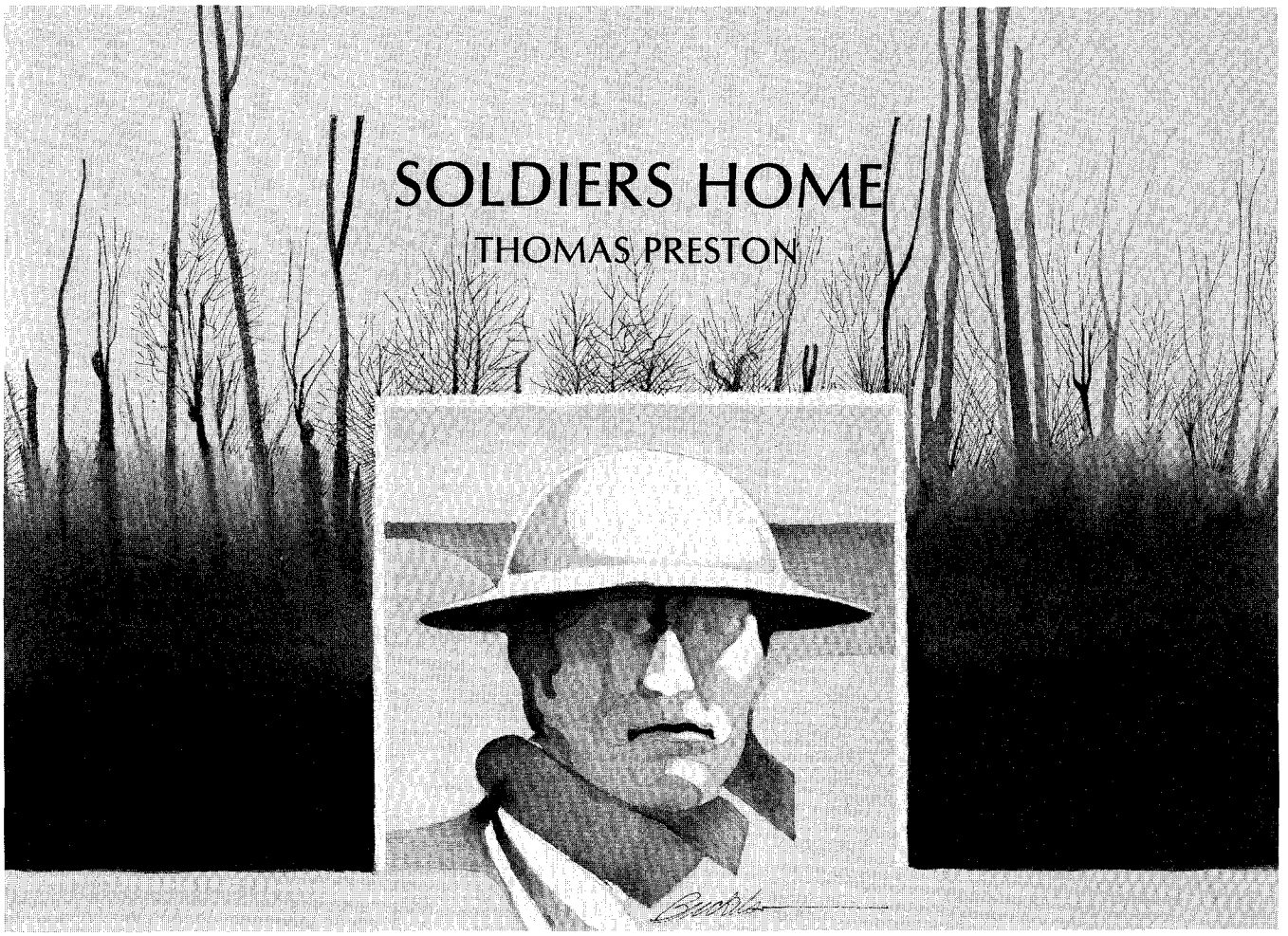

SOLDIERS HOME

THOMAS PRESTON

Griggs came to the park drunk again. They propped him against a bench and he was soon asleep. "Poor Griggs," they all said. Everyone felt sorry for Griggs.

Griggs had been a very bad soldier. He had been even a worse civilian, but no one mentioned that.

"Do you remember how old Griggy would shut his eyes when he fired his piece?" Phelps said.

They nodded and looked at Griggs sleeping on the bench.

"Look how he sleeps," one of them said.

"He can't get a job," Phelps said. He was a tall, prematurely bald man.

"What's new?" Kelsey said from the other bench. Everyone looked at Kelsey.

"Remember those Jerries we flushed up at Belaux...?" Phelps said, "Remember?"

"Yah, Phelps," Kelsey said.

"Griggy wouldn't shoot at them. He shot up in the goddamn air! I never told anyone...," Phelps added.

They were silent for a few minutes. Wittingham stretched out in the grass, looking across the park grounds. Everything was green and nice. It had been cold and snowy at Belaux. They must have walked right up on the Germans. They had been trying to keep warm too...

"Where in the hell is Ries?" Phelps demanded. He suddenly jumped up from the bench and walked over to the fountain.

"Where is Ries? Where is Ries?" Kelsey taunted, under his breath. He couldn't stand to look at Phelps anymore. If Ries didn't want to come to the park, that was his business, Kelsey thought. ...They were almost on top of them when the Germans bolted from behind a thicket and started to run for their own lines. There were three of them...

"Whataya thinking about, Witt?" Kelsey said. Wittingham didn't answer. Kelsey turned toward Griggs sleeping on the bench.

"It's so green...," Wittingham finally answered.

"Yah, what?" Kelsey demanded. He was irritated by the fact that Wittingham was lying on his stomach, pointing away from him. Wittingham never could stand to face anyone man to man. He was a goddamn sissy.

"The park, the grass, it's such a...a green...almost like it wasn't so. Is it green to you, Kels?"

"Yah, Witt, sure. It's a good green, I guess."

Phelps came back from the fountain, his mouth dripping water. He looked wild. He paced back and forth between the park benches.

THOMAS PRESTON works in the water department of the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and is a newcomer to the NAR.

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"So why don't you sit down, Phelps?" Kelsey said.

"I got to watch for Ries," Phelps answered.

"So maybe he ain't comin' today, Phelps. So relax. He don't have to come, you know."

Phelps stopped and looked across the park once more. Then he sat down on the bench, finally, and looked at Griggs. Watching Griggs seemed to quiet him.

"Griggy just ain't going to adjust," Phelps finally announced.

"I agree," Kelsey said, "shooting in the air...jesus!"

The grass looked artificial, it was so green, like the stuff they used to pack in the bottom of Easter baskets when they were kids. He blinked his eyes.

...The Germans were running loose-legged, their arms flailing the air. They had no weapons. Why couldn't they let them go? They were too cold to do anyone any harm, besides they were just stragglers, maybe even deserters...

"Remember how Griggs was always drunk over there, too?" Phelps said, "He was always finding something."

"What's he been in today?" Kelsey asked.

Phelps leaned over and smelled of Griggs.

"I can't tell. What difference does it make?"

"Poor Griggy."

"Shoot in the air Griggy."

"He can't face it."

"It's too real, like Witt's grass," Kelsey said with a laugh.

"It is real...," Wittingham announced over his shoulder. They stared at him. Kelsey wanted to jump on Wittingham. He hated him. Wittingham had an ass like a girls', rounded and full and perked up in the air like he was just waiting for it.

Wittingham could see the heat rising off the grass in soft little waves. The air collapsed and started to melt and then he saw them running across the hard snow of Belaux, their helmets flying off behind them and their ridiculous, exaggerated, movement of arms and legs as they tried to outrun the puffs of snow kicking up around them.

"Hit em, Hit EMMM, SOMEBODYEEE!"

Everyone was firing. He did not remember Griggs firing in the air...

"You lied," he said to Phelps.

"Huh...?" Phelps started to say.

"About Griggs, you lied about that. It was me," Wittingham said, turning his head around. Phelps and Kelsey stared at him.

"It was me," Wittingham declared flatly once more. He turned around again.

Phelps got up and walked over in front of Wittingham. He kneeled down so that he was nearly eye to eye with him. Wittingham had a smile on his face.

"Don't do that again," Phelps said. He couldn't stop his voice from cracking.

"I won't," Wittingham answered. He stared back at Phelps. Kelsey started to moan on the bench. His head was in his hands.

"Where is that goddamn Ries?!!" Phelps said, going over to the fountain again. He bent over the fountain and let the cold stream of water play over his lips. His eyes were tightly closed. In a few moments his lips were numb.

...One of them stopped and Wittingham could see the stain on the man's back. More rounds impacted. The man fell and lay face down in the snow...

"Don't cry, Kels," Phelps said, coming back over to the bench. He put his arm across Kelsey's back.

"I can't help it. What are we supposed to do without him here?" Kelsey said, trying to catch his breath. Phelp's voice was very soft.

"Without who, Kels?"

"Ries..."

Phelps stood up. He looked around the grounds searching the empty benches. He started to back away from Kelsey, his eyes on a plane above the green grass.

"Don't you say that, Kelsey, don't you say that anymore. He's just late, that's all."

"No, noooo..." Kelsey cried.

Now he remembered who it was that had been firing in the air....The shock of it made him stand up. Ahead, he could see the body sprawled in the snow and the long black trails where the shells had gone. The other two were still running. Maybe they would make it. But even as he watched, one of them fell...

"That will be enough for today, gentleman. Mr. Wittingham, you can come back now."

Wittingham stopped and turned around. He had walked about twenty yards. He stared down at the grass. It was really quite brown, he thought.

"Don't you think you've had enough water now, Mr. Phelps?"

"I was thirsty."

"Please go help Mr. Wittingham back over here for me, will you Mr. Phelps?"

Wittingham was still staring down at the grass.

"Too far...," Phelps mumbled.

"Mr. Wittingham needs you...." Phelps hesitated. He wiped the water from his mouth with his sleeves.

"Yah...when is he ever going to...adjust?" Phelps said, walking away.

The man on the bench turned to Kelsey. Kelsey's head was still in his arms.

"You did fine today, Mr. Kelsey."

"No, no, I didn't, no...," Kelsey said, unable to raise his head.

"You said some nice things about your friend today and I think Mr. Wittingham discovered something too."

"...what?"

"It's something that Mr. Griggs and Mr. Ries have already learned."

"Ries ain't comin', is he?"

"No. And I daresay Mr. Wittingham may soon follow Mr. Griggs and Mr. Ries, soon."

"Where is that?" Kelsey said.

The man on the bench smiled as Kelsey raised his head.

"Tomorrow, Mr. Kelsey, tomorrow."

Kelsey looked up as Phelps and Wittingham came across the lawn, their arms around each other's shoulders. They were smiling. Kelsey got to his feet and looked at Griggs still asleep on the bench.

"C'mon Griggs," he said.

Griggs didn't stir. Kelsey smiled. Griggs would never adjust.

He went over to Phelps and Wittingham. Together, they walked across the faded grass. □

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8 Poems

GARY PACERNIK

STORY

This gray-haired woman with blue numbers on her arm
Gives the boy with watery blue eyes a bagel.
When he puts a quarter in her hand, she starts to cry.
That old man, wrapped in the zebra striped shawl,
Only his black eyes and beard showing, shakes his finger
At the boy who stands next to him, flapping his wings.
There are holes in the old man's shoes.
His toes are crying children.
Suddenly all the children fly away.
A vulture hovers over the synagogue.

THOMAS JOHNSON

ABRASIVE

Listen. Some grit must result
From all this
Chafing of days, years,
And how shrilly
Stupid of us to think
With those little wheels
A clock is content
To squat in the millrun
Without grinding a secret sack
Of meal for itself
From the minutes that
Bend like wheatspears over the
Marriage bed, part
That we may walk a bit farther into
Our own transparence
Each evening, pulled as if
By some lost muleshoe, upright
Like an iron rainbow waxing magnetic
In the gully,
Drawing us ring, beltbuckle, and
Sweephand
To the edge
Of the flesh
From which, backing away,
We invent for awhile longer
This contour
Resembling a body.

REG SANER

THIS COULD HAVE BEEN THE PLACE

There is an angry, irritable desire we burn
as fuel, refusing to believe what we are
is anything like it. An invisible jet
chalklines west under June cirrus, its severe
functional aim relaxing slowly
with a general drift, an aimlessness
taking vapor curls one by one
for part of some intricate design.

Bursting at the seams all week
our big cottonwood lavishes an early cat
with millions of free balloons. Two insects
generating angular, whiskery legs couple
like a twin-rotor thing barely heavier
than air, floating off
on currents whose swarm and mix
confuses incredible cottonwood forests
with the ghosts of swallows.

I love these drapery folds that contour
our nextdoor hills—their metallic flashes
of jimson tip, bunchgrass tassels
showing up sunburnt. And a week's
green rain still juicing
the rest of each stalk.

After such bad blood, such years
of irrelevant drive, I find myself
here. Standing quietly
a little past the center of a life
for which, who knows just how far back,
this could have been the place.

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8 Poems

JAMES APPLEWHITE

SESSION IN THE *SAND HILLS*

I

Trips east, I navigate into distances like being lost,
and wander as if someone out of life.
Land falls away in sandy flanks, with orchards
and new furrowing, to sky like light for an infant.

Collecting dirt road glimpses, I am freed to see:
fields turning strange, as if looked at by eyes
of other lives. China ball trees, prodigal with useless fruit.
Yards of winter weeds gone a gray beyond humility.

The finger of physical being, when it touches here and there,
makes board walls tremble. Two wrestle on a wadding
and pull down a spirit. Stunned by these surroundings, it forgets,
thinks ants traveling skin-smoothed bark are its limit.

II

We played in a backyard sand. My cousin's skin indented
and was biscuit plump. Folded by the moss-fenced lane,
I held to her a vein swollen tight with my heart.
She uncovered in answer her white slit-pout.

When placed by my wife's limbs again, in a language
of hours, I'll be more contented. No hourglass drained
our sand-piled world down a funnel. A board fence higher than
the wind held her by a fish pond in a photograph of sun.

Particles of my sight are shining, black scrawls with grains
still travel, where two roots seem a crux between thighs.
Born into loneliness, I am vibrating in time, puzzling
at ciphers, above egg, black ant, love and the lottery.

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8 Poems

VIC COCCIMIGLIO

BECOMING THE MAN IN THE GLASS PAPERWEIGHT

I cannot be kept inside all day with stones.
That is no place for me.
My fish told me that: They floated

to the surface—separating the milk-
weed I had for the babies to hide from the Angel

fish—they knew I would have to remove them
in their catatonic state before their eyes

fogged, and their bodies became translucent white
like my finger after the bandage has been removed.

But when I dropped them
in the toilet bowl they came alive like sperm
dancing under a microscope, calling me *murderer*
in their bubble language. I went back to the living

room, and pissed in the aquarium—singing—trying to drown
the sound of the pump: *This life's not for me, boss.*

DANIEL J. LANGTON

IMPULSE

I think I'll write a poem to my penis
(though Fesler says penis is a dirty word).
Still, though, I think I should write a poem to my

How it reacts at dances,
Supports my kidney,
Refuses follies.

The memory of my women
Intimidates the inept,
My conduct is my history —
The clean piss shattering
The illusions of the bowl
Is *perfectly* all right,
I accept the hard roll
Of forgetting to buy bread.

And weak men stare at us
And dream of being us;
I am one with South American poets
Who know where it is.

I fondle you in busses,
You mortify the news
(it is necessary
that the poem be long).

I reject alternatives;
What can you do
But reject alternatives?

But back to my penis,
Hero of more adventures
Than I have had adventures.
(I can hear my son laughing.)
Come in!

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8 Poems

STEPHEN DUNN

DIRECTIONS

The yogis return from the ashram
in their loose whites, in their
pink-cheeked radiances.

Here in the world of distraction,
where I live, I've been
downing scotch and eating

the flesh of an animal. That's
how it is. I love them
and they love me -

one of them is the woman I married
long ago when she was as provocative
as corruption, the other

an old jock friend
shedding his skin.
They tell me the dross

they've cast off, just this weekend,
what Gurugi said about ego
(that trickster in us

with a brilliant shield), how the
breaths they've learned to breathe
take them into the hidden

chakras of the heart.
Oh, I'm the wild renunciate
of nothing, happy they're happy,

but feeling more like a wastrel every minute.
I pour myself a drink, try to get
the talk around to the NCAA

playoffs, a shot at the buzzer
that made me leap out of my seat.
It's useless, they're so loving today

they love everything I say
indiscriminately, they think in time
maya will lift its veil,

that I'll finally make a plan
that has a path. As I put my arms
around them, I'm thinking

Christs, the sinners have no choice
but to hang you up there
everytime you make them feel how fat

they are, those bones of yours sticking out
like wisdom we can neither afford
nor bear, and I start to dance

around the room in circles, leading them,
and now they are dancing,
leading me, and we're each going

where our bodies take us, into what
recesses, what
next steps.

MARK JARMAN

FOREIGNERS, SCOTLAND

Now, in the stone kitchen,
the open honey jar is clotted with wasps,
a thin breeze chills the house
but we keep the window open.

Now we can take a little
from this place, having got through our first winter here.

Nights when the walls of hollow cinder block
poured dust down through themselves
and the chimney flues blew out their gags of newspaper,
all the lights went on; we hurried
to the living room and waited.

Next door, in white cardigan and sun hat,
the widow comes to the garden wall and leans
awkwardly over. She shows us the chink
where the wasps have stuck their nest.
She offers us a cup of plaster
to close it, which we take.

Her lips are full and blue,
her fingernails blue. Though we think
her heavy arms and face
have strength, we wonder,
watching the wasps hover near their sealed hive,
if she will live much longer
or, at least, as long as we live here.

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W. COTTER MURRAY

A STORY

For Noel

"I mean to say whether a yarn is tall or small I like to hear it well told. I like to meet a man that can take in hand to tell a story and not make a balls of it while he's at it. I like to know where I am do you know. Everything has a beginning and an end."
—Anthony Lamont, in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim Two Birds*

Maybe I shouldn't be telling you this story at all. You might get the wrong impression.

—Did I ever tell you about the Colonel's corpse?

—He lived down in Bally, you know. The Colonel. Retired there after serving years in Her Majesty's Forces. What the hell he retired to Bally for, I don't know. This was the early Fifties. I was in Medical School then, at the University. Maybe the Colonel thought the Empire was still going strong in Bally. It's a sleepy harbour town. Next stop, Land's End. There was an old woman there and she told the priest she never heard Christ died. She lived so far out of the way in Bally, sure they never got news what was happening in the Middle East!

—My father was a physician there, the poor man. A great friend of the Colonel's. Used to have him over to the house for bridge. Mother and Father played with him. I made a fourth. Played dummy a lot. You would too, with the Colonel.

—Straight out of Kipling. A real pukka sahib. Six four in his stocking feet. A belly as big as a Guinness barrel. A W.C. Fields face; schnozzle to match. Thatch of grey hair like a bird's nest on top. Waxed moustache. Sipped straight gin playing bridge. You'd have to be a clairvoyant to figure his bidding as the evening wore on.

—He had a cottage on Harbour Road, looking across at the English Coast. That's loyalty to the Old Country for you. A local girl kept house for him. There were rumours. About himself and the girl. With a belly the size of his 'twas hard to believe the rumours. You never can tell, though. If people want it, they'll find a way to have it. He had a parrot he used to carry around on a stick. When he was sober. The Colonel, I mean, not the parrot. The locals said he got the parrot so he'd have someone around who understood him. Well, he was harmless. The Colonel. I don't know about the parrot. Everyone liked the Colonel. A character. A real live character. When he'd get drunk in the hotel bar, he'd start talking about the 'Umpire'. He didn't know Ireland was no longer in the 'Umpire'. World War I passed him by; and World War II. The 'Umpire' stuck him off somewhere; in the Falklands, maybe. And left him there for the duration of two wars. Then, they told him he had to retire. And he retired back here to Bally. Why? God only knows. He took the secret to his grave.

—A heavy drinker. Started in the morning with sherry in two raw eggs. Then, ale at noon. After five, 'twas straight gin all the way 'till he fell in bed. My father warned him to cut down. All he said was, "Sir" and walked out of the dispensary.

—One morning, they found him lying out stiff on top of the harbour wall. Crop stick in hand. The housekeeper reported him missing, and a search party went out to the sandhills. The Colonel used to like walking the sandhills. The young lovers courted there. You get the point? The search party found the body on the wall. I suppose he'd taken it in his head to go for a constitutional after the hotel bar closed. Maybe he wanted to see the English coast in the middle of the night? Who knows what went on in his head. He loved a constitutional, though. See him out walking in all kinds of weather, day or night drunk or sober; gut in, chest out, the parrot perched on the crop stick, and he chatting away at it.

—Got a coronary, I suppose, sitting there watching the dark. That bull neck and hippo belly. Sure signs a coronary is on the way.

—Father did a quick autopsy in Bally. No foul play. The gin killed the poor bugger. When they read the will, they found he'd donated his body to science. To us. The Medical

W. COTTER MURRAY teaches at the University of Iowa. His most recent novel was A Long Way from Home *(Houghton Mifflin) and he is presently on leave to devote himself to his own works.*

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School at the University. And they shipped the body to us in a coffin. I was doing Anatomy that year. When I heard the body was on the way, I took a personal interest. After all, he was one of our own. In a sort of way. I wanted to make sure he was treated with respect. I got in touch with our two porters, Jimmy McGuire and Dan Andrews. They took care of the stiffs coming in. I said I'd give them a hand with the Colonel.

—We opened the coffin. There he was in his pukka sahib outfit, cork helmet and riding crop beside him. He looked all belly, now, somehow. As I say, he was a big man.—Jesus, Doc, we'll need a block and tackle to lift him out, Jimmy McGuire said. Jimmy took the head, Dan the feet, and I grabbed him by the belt. He'd been packed in tight down in Bally. We tugged and pulled and hauled and got him up on the edge of the coffin. We stopped for a rest. The coffin tipped over and the poor Colonel fell on the concrete floor before we could save him. Fortunately, he wasn't injured.

—Well, to make a short story shorter, we lifted him off the floor and up on the slab. I thought I'd get a hernia. We undressed him, then. Threw the pukka sahib outfit in the waste can. Jimmy kept the helmet and riding crop for his kids.

—Those days we didn't have any fancy equipment in the Anatomy Lab. One marble slab for all the stiffs. Of both sexes. In the rafters over the slab, a fifty gallon tank of formaldehyde, and a long rubber tube with a clamp on it running down to the slab.

—Jimmy cut a gash in the femoral artery, shoved in the tube, took off the clamp. And we stood back about fifteen feet.

—Geysers of stuff poured out of him. There's nine openings in the body, and stuff was coming out of all of them at once. The formaldehyde cleaned him out fast. It's a wonder he didn't burst wide open. Tough carcass still.

—When he was flushed out good, we bunged up the arsehole. Jimmy hosed him down, and Dan swept the remains in the gutter with a yard brush. We gave the body a good shower, his last. He shone like he'd just come out of a bath. All we had to do then was shove him in the tank with the other lads and lassies.

—We kept the stiffs in a tank of formaldehyde in the Anatomy Lab so they'd be handy when we wanted one. We dried the Colonel off with a rag so he wouldn't be too slippery to carry, and we hauled him over to the tank. He was a lot lighter, now.

—Well, we ran into trouble. You see, we couldn't get the Colonel in the tank. His belly had swelled up twice its normal size and we couldn't push him through the hole into the tank. The belly stuck in the hole. Swelled with gas, maybe.

—We hauled him back on the slab, and unbunged the arse, and pounded the belly down flat. Did you ever hear a corpse fart? Queer, that. Last sounds on earth. We hauled him back to the tank and shoved him in without any trouble. He floated above the rest of the stiffs with his arms out and legs parted and a pretty fair sized dong hanging. He'd need one that size with that belly of his. I wanted to say a prayer or sing a hymn or do something. For old time's sake. I didn't know any Protestant hymns or prayers, so I just called attention. And the three of us saluted.

—Well, I forgot all about the Colonel, then. About a week later I had a call from my father. The Colonel had relatives in London and they wanted to have a funeral; and they wanted the Colonel's body present at the funeral. They thought the Medical School ought to be finished using him for whatever we were using him for. We hadn't used him at all yet, sure.

—We had pleny of Irish stiffs on hand. I didn't want to offend the Colonel's English relatives. Who knows what might happen? Another invasion, maybe. We decided to give them back the body. I got in touch with Jimmy and Dan, and we went down to the tank to fish the Colonel back out.

—All the stiffs were piled on top of each other in a kind of orgy of togetherness at the bottom of the tank. We couldn't tell which one was the Colonel.—Take the top one, Dan said; no one will know the difference. Something held me back. I thought it would not be right not to have the Colonel present at his own funeral. I stuck the pole in and started poking around the bodies at the bottom of the tank. After a while in the tank, all corpses look alike. I pushed and poked, breaking up the happy family. Then, I saw one with a moustache. I suppose the Colonel had left orders to be buried with his moustache on. I fished him out.

—We hauled him to the slab. He seemed heavier. Maybe we were weaker. Anyway, we were heaving him up on the slab, and goddamit, we must have heaved a bit hard. He slid off the slab and fell down on the other side. That was a fall of three feet. We hurried around. His right arm was hanging loose and the left leg was all twisted up under him! What would the English relatives think when they took a look at the Beloved that way? Well, we'd have to fix him up. We lifted him back up on the slab. He let a couple of farts.
—Don't hurt him, Dan said.

—I started to patch him up. Put the leg and the arm in plaster casts. Jimmy was watching me, and just to be in on the action, went home and brought back his wife's rose pink and powder and lipstick. We powdered and rouged and lipsticked.—A little art never hurt anyone, Jimmy said. He was beginning to look almost human again. Then, we puffed out the cheeks with cotton wool. We even pumped air in him with a bicycle pump. Up went the belly again. As if he didn't have enough air in him already. Then, we stood back to survey our work.

—Something was wrong. He lay there naked. We'd have to dress him in something. The pukka sahib outfit was gone.
—Ah, to hell with it, we'll have to finish off the job right, I said.—How would he look in pyjamas? Dan said.

—Something was getting into me, now. It must be like when an artist has a painting almost finished and he knows it still lacks something to make it perfect. The pyjamas idea sounded good. I offered to buy a pair from a pound note I had left for food the rest of the month. I was willing to sacrifice myself for my art, don't you see? Jimmy knew a shop where we could get a pair for ten bob. And so we set off to buy the pyjamas. On the way, we decided that since I had ten shillings left over from my pound, we might as well have a couple of drinks. And one drink led to another. You know how it is. And we ended up spending the pound and had nothing for the pyjamas.

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—Dan was for putting him balls naked in the coffin.—He came in naked, what harm is there in sending him out naked? I didn't like the idea. It was like unfinished work. I had two pairs of pyjamas in my digs, and offered one. We adjourned to my digs. I'm a small man, and my pyjamas would come nowhere near fitting the Colonel. Jimmy thought a while.—We'll bring them to the wife and see what she can do.

—So, we set off for Jimmy's house. We were fairly flying about this time, and determined to send the Colonel back to his relatives in some kind of style.

—I explained to Jimmy's wife what we wanted. This pyjamas made for a man five six had to be turned into a pyjamas to fit a corpse six foot four. Could it be done? She looked at me.—Yeer all drunk, she said; I have an old dress maybe would do. I told her that the Colonel came into the world looking like a man and I wanted him to go out looking like one.—A dress has nothing to do with that, she said, looking for an argument. I had to humble myself and plead with her. Anything for the sake of art.

—We adjourned to a pub where I was able to get a few drinks on credit on the strength of being a medical student in good standing.

—When we got back, Jimmy's wife had the pyjamas ready. She'd lengthened the legs with material from old flour sacks, and widened the top with more of the same. Well, it wasn't style, but 'twould have to do.

—Back at the Lab, we fitted the Colonel into his new pyjamas. And, bygod, if in some way he didn't seem handsome. Like a man ready for bed and not the grave.

—We had a little trouble packing him back in the coffin. He felt heavier and seemed to have grown taller. All the attention he was getting. For a minute as we were packing him in, I thought he might come alive. Like Frankenstein.

—I screwed down the lid tight.—Requiescat in pace, I said, hoping this time he'd stay put, and stop rising up at us.—Amen, amen, amen, the other two intoned.

—But, that wasn't to be the end of the Colonel. I had to wait for word from Bally, from the English relatives when they arrived. So, we had to keep the coffin in the Lab. The fellows got interested in what was in the coffin. And I told them the story. And they had to have a look at the Colonel. And greatly admired our work. They started bringing other students to have a look. The whole Medical School, faculty and students, must have ended up parading past the Colonel like he was Lying in State in the Lab.

—In the end, word came from Bally. The whole Medical School turned out to see him off. Someone had a bugle, and blew taps.

—I didn't go to the service. I was curious to go. You wanted to know when the relatives looked at the body, what they thought. I felt maybe like an artist must feel wanting to know what the viewers thought of his painting.

—He was buried in Bally in the protestant graveyard outside of town. I'm glad, in a way, he wasn't shipped to England. Who knows what might have happened on the way? And anyway, I wanted Irish earth to have him, after all my work. You couldn't help but feel that somehow you'd made a new man of him at the end. I don't think I could have stood by in the Lab and watched him scalped and skinned and carved up like a piece of meat. □

JOHN MORGAN

THE BEHAVIORIST

The angles of his face tend toward dispersion,
his ways are diffident, cold, unendearing,

and you wonder about his childhood:
how early this graceless scion of the gentry
knowing that only his brains would carry him
began to perceive those
gestures and responses by which other people
meet and get acquainted, gestures
which he must study in order to know.

It puzzles you how he managed to court his wife
and what attracted her, whether
it was despair
or the thought that she (more fluent in gesture
and in relationships) would eventually
gain mastership in their house; or was it love?

Probably it was love, and that thought
makes you look again,
noticing the cleavages in his face
unable to soften themselves in any way.

Would she say, "He is not easy to know
but once you know him..."?

Now they have moved to Australia,

and have left behind a cat ("Tiger Lily,"
mother of eight, who has moved into your house
and keeps to herself where the warm air gathers
on the attic stairs). Because of her
you have recalled
the isolation he must live with at every moment
which the rest of us submerge in mere 'relationships'
until that time
when charm and spontaneity can do us no more good
and we must cast off, along with our confusions,
the concinnity of features that was our mask.

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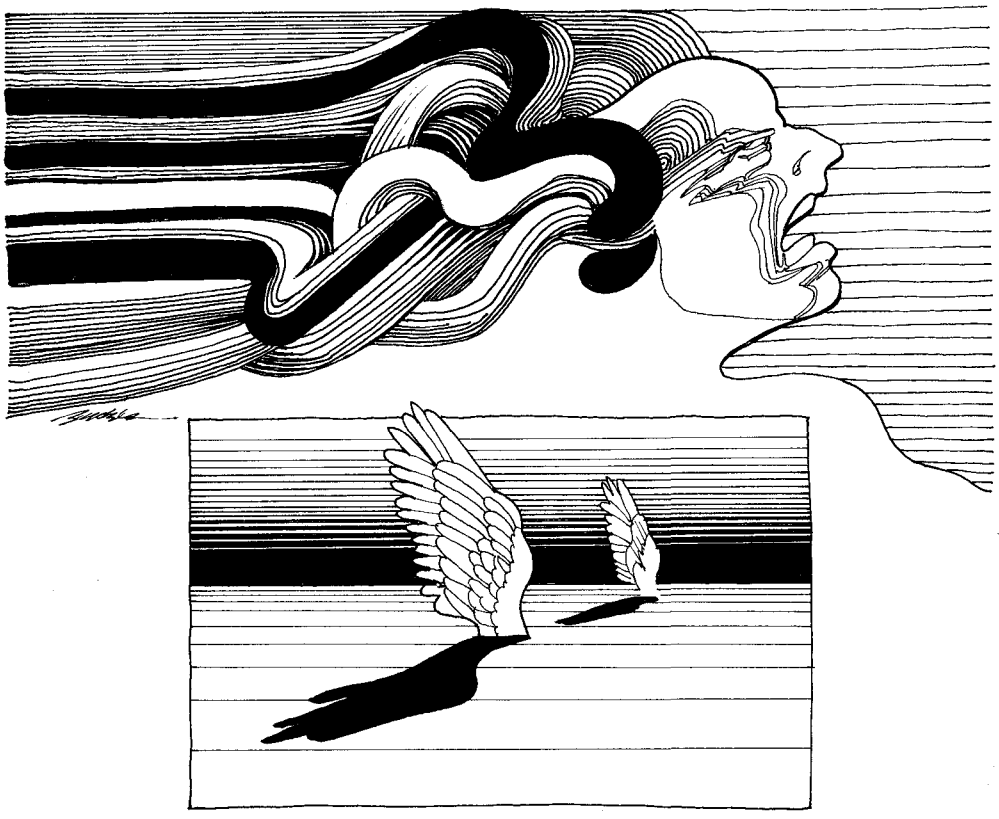
ONE OF THE RUNNERS

WILLIAM COMFORT



His feet pounded on the street, slap-slap, slap-slap. He had found that he actually preferred running on the asphalt to the cushiony feel of grass—it seemed harder, more actual. "Actual" was his important word these days. He dealt with necessities. The pounding of feet jogging, the crunch of brown walnuts between flexing steel cylinders, signatures on dotted lines, air slicing deep into lungs, regular commission checks in the mail. He had given to his life the quality of a well-tuned used automobile—utter functionality. He accepted his limitations and accentuated his virtues. Wind blew easily over his tank-topped shoulders. He was finally pretty sure of things.

WILLIAM COMFORT is a University of Massachusetts alumnus and lives in Johnson City, Tennessee.

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He turned a corner, started up a hill, slowed his pace. In the university things had been tentative, clinging, ivy climbing brick. He had had to escape the rarefied world of political science, of intuited truths surfacing as theories, of tenuous viewpoints and vacuous sophomores. Unlike the botanist with his specimens, he could deal only with entities and abstractions: fine-printed charts and parchment documents were his only referents. Teaching the effect of the Russo-Japanese war on contemporary foreign relations often left him perplexed before the class, like a little boy whose arm has just mowed down all of his rubber soldiers. He had midnight visions of wild parties attended by students who in his classes scribbled furiously with Bic pens. Committee meetings were a vortex touching down on budget and seniority and student relations; they left him tired and spinning. The excitement that had initially grabbed him in political simulation games eventually left him feeling grainy and dry, like sawdust run through fingers. So he had got out. He followed John Clark, a former sociology teacher, into the insurance business. Here a policy *was* a policy—the details of its workings were set out in bold terms whose actions were predictable. In event of x, then y. You knew what would happen.

Nearing home he lengthened his stride. As he looked down, the black hairs stood out on his legs. His lungs swelled and sucked in, faster and faster. In the business world he again felt a part of America. He was free, and he acted. He talked on the phone, obtained referrals, made appointments, spoke to stolid faces, pointed out contingencies and eventualities, ended sessions with a clean smile and a firm handshake. He greeted agents of competing companies with friendliness. No pressure to publish here, no grinding to find a new means of abstraction or a new twist of interpretation. Just simple competition, the striving that makes a man hardy.

John Clark had also led him into conditioning. When he left the university he was thirty pounds overweight, with a double chin and a heaving chest. John got him into jogging and isometrics. He ran fifteen miles a week now, the wind crisp in his shorter hair, and he pitted muscle against muscle for thirty minutes three times a week. He shed the weight, firmed the chin and his general muscle-tone, took flights of stairs in half the time. He ate skim-milk cheese and sesame and soya, avoided cholesterol, switched from coffee to tea. He drank warm milk before bed and slept better. Things were clearer, understandable in a light he had not seen since the days of his paper-route.

He spent a final burst of speed and, panting, walked up the final steps to the door. He had moved his family to this smaller white frame house. Green shutters and clear black house numerals set it in perspective. After shedding his clothes, he stepped into the shower, anticipating the needles of spray. He liked to jog a mile before breakfast, towel vigorously until the flesh was pink, eat fat-free egg-substitute and whole wheat. He wore light jackets and dark double-knit trousers; he preferred white shirts and navy-blue ties. His command of syntax and modulation of voice enabled him to clarify neatly the details of a policy. He developed different handshakes and tones of voice and intuited the best to use with each client. He liked to be home at 4:30 and running by 5:00. After the rewarding shower he drank cranberry juice as a cocktail and munched gouda cheese, having lunched on whole-grain crackers with sesame butter, and tea. Two to three nights a week he made family calls. His wife, who enthusiastically prepared in iron cookware the low-fat high-vitamin meals his regimen called for, waited up and responded gratefully in bed.

Tonight he called on the Carvers, a new family referred to him by Welcome Wagon. He knocked sharply on the door, avoiding the bell. With a bright smile Mrs. Carver bade him enter. A broad woman with fine brown hair, she explained that Mr. Carver was working late, but that she would serve as agent for them both. She clutched a brooch at her breast and offered him a seat on a blue divan. He smiled and said he could explain the prospectus and leave it for her to show her husband.

"But I must tell you," she said, "all this concern over the 'future' leaves me a little cold. 'Live for today,' that's my philosophy. I can't see sinking a lot of money into things that may never happen."

He tugged at his tie. "But they *do* happen, Mrs. Carver, unfortunately. And frequently misfortunes happen when we're least prepared for them, financially as well as, oh, emotionally. We'd all like to trust to progress, and its securities, we'd all like to believe that things move ahead orderly and purposefully—but so-called acts of God cannot be averted. Disaster strikes—and hard. And, of course, the purview of our company includes life insurance, as well as accident and theft. You will admit, Mrs. Carver, that death comes to us all?" He gave a tight-skinned tanned smile and looked the woman in the eyes.

"Of course, of course, but...." She threw her hands into the air and looked away. "I know it's silly, but I don't like the idea of making *money* when someone dies. It's like, oh, *betting* on death, like it's a horse race or something. But here—I'm forgetting myself. Do you take anything with your coffee?"

He said he'd prefer tea if she had it. She returned a few minutes later with white earthenware cups and a big bowl of apples. "I insist you try some of these apples, we picked them ourselves last Sunday out at the Henderson orchard. They're delicious—so juicy." She took one and bit deep.

He stirred his tea and picked up an apple. He began explaining the difference between whole life and reducing term insurance, rotating the apple as he spoke. There was a dark spot on one side and it felt mealy. He reached it back toward the basket.

"Now, now, I absolutely *refuse* to discuss business with you unless you do me the duty of sampling my fare. I *am* the hostess, you know." She gave him a playful eye-twinkling smile. He tugged at his tie and smiled, then took a bite. It didn't taste too bad.

"You see," she said, "I have this 'old-fashioned' belief that people ought to take care of their own—not businesses, not the government—but *people.* Families. Now when my sister's husband died, they were left almost destitute. But Harry and I absolutely refused to let them go on welfare. We took them in until she could find a job, we helped her finance a smaller house, and—you know?—with all the inconvenience and the scrimping, it brought us closer. We cared. Today, with big corporations and the government getting into everything, people hardly care

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anymore. It's always, 'look to that check,' 'let a federal program fund it,' 'the government pays, why save?' I say, families and *love* are *more important* than welfare or insurance, *they* are what make life *glorious*. You can't *plan* it—it always has to *be* there." She settled back. "Well, I guess I've said my piece. Now eat up that apple. It's good for you. Keeps the doctor away. Go on."

He grinned and ate and explained that preparing for the future financially was one of the soundest ways of showing love. People show reverence for God in their offering, don't they? Doesn't a family pay for a child's education because they love it? Certainly, overemphasis on money can alienate human value, but as an index of planning it was genuine concern, even sacred concern. Since money represented for the twentieth century what had once been the fruits of craftsmanship and domestic work, to provide it, to provide money, was to provide essential family services, and, really, the dearest form of love—security.

"Well, it just seems to me that God expects us to deal with things one at a time," she said. "I mean, to spend money on premiums might mean we couldn't take the kids to the circus, or we'd have to cut short our vacation, or something like that. I think you have to concentrate on needs *now*. Look to today, let tomorrow take care of itself."

He explained that such thinking was all right for earlier times, but in a time of such complexity, such contingency as the modern world, one couldn't afford such a *carpe diem* view. We have to think of the long view, not only in light of ourselves, but in that of future generations.

"Well, you talk quite a case," she said. "I still feel I ought to stand by my feelings, but I'll show this material to my husband and talk it over with him."

He said he would call back soon.

"And listen," she said as she showed him to the door with her big smile, "why don't you and your missus come over for fried chicken and mashed potatoes sometime. I *still* make fried chicken the way it ought to be made—home-seasoned and deep-fried. I guarantee you won't find any better. Are you in the book? Good, *I'll* call *you*. Good-bye!"

Something nagged him over the next few days. As he watched his car being washed, he thought of the viscous grime closeted beneath the gleaming steel and soft upholstery. In sales meetings he became aware of the smell of hair tonic and stale deodorant. A policeman who stopped him for sliding through a stop sign tugged up on a stomach that spilled over his belt. He felt queasy and lost his appetite.

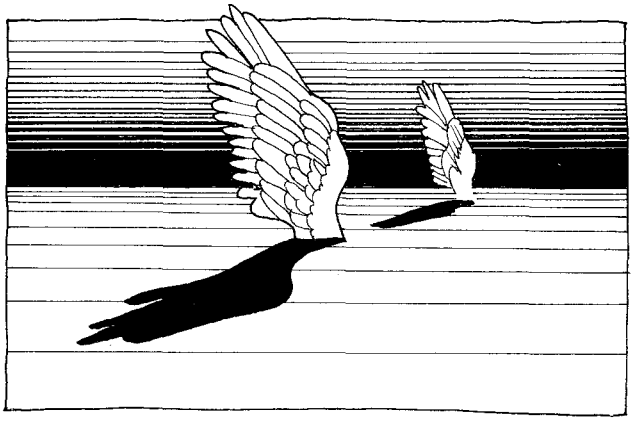
Late one night, unable to sleep, he leafed through the pages of some of his books. He had hardly touched them since leaving the university. As he ran his hand over the waffle of hair at his neck, he read phrases from Gibbon and Spengler and Schirer, the chroniclers of decline. These men wrote of political degeneration; as they wrote they filled volumes of blank pages with words, freezing time, isolating experience. Hobbes came into his mind: "life is nasty brutish and short." Yes. You have to grab hold. You can't count on things. He looked out the window to the long shadows from the street-lamps that rippled over the street like ghostly fingers. Love was light—didn't the Bible say that? You have to contend. Suddenly the queasy feeling hit. He hurried to the bathroom and found he had diarrhea.

He was nervous the next day and barely touched his breakfast. He had to leave the sales meeting twice to go to the bathroom. After a hurried lunchtime appointment he went home. Lying on his bed, he stared at the ceiling: just this time a year ago he had been teaching his class on contractual government. He was discussing the reasons why men form societies, and the limitations to freedom that can result from such bonding. To protect life, to protect property, men must come together. Yes. A man is free to meet his needs until he begins to encroach upon the life of another. How far did that life extend? Where did a man draw his lines? It had to be, he always knew, the greatest good of the greatest number, however unjust it might seem to some. A man could contend within limits.

He decided he needed to run.

He stood up. He stretched and bent, twisting his torso to the right, to the left. He did a light spring into the air. He felt OK.

The sun was beating good and hot. He swung out around the corner and strode out. His arms pumped, he took a stride longer than usual, it felt good to let it out. The trees were in full leaf and he felt on his chest the splotch of their shade and filtered light. A dog ran out at him and barked. He



ran harder. His Adidas shoes absorbed the heavier steps, slap-slap, slap-slap. A car buzzed by close to him, a face hanging out yelling back at him, the howl of the Doppler effect, the mouth open in a hollow black square. He could feel sweat breaking out all over him.

He turned a corner. He was laboring. A sense of rubbery weakness rippled through his legs. He saw a group of children ahead. Then it hit him. His guts rumbled and he felt his bowels churn like a twisting telephone cable. The diarrhea flooded with a rush before he could prepare for it. He could feel it run warm and sticky down the backs of his legs, he could smell the animal stench. He ran harder. He saw the children pointing at him, some laughing, some stock-still with stunned faces. The diarrhea poured. He reached the next corner, turned, cut diagonally across a yard, rushed in his front door and raced up the stairs. He leaped into the bathtub and with shoes still on, turned on the water.

He bowed his head. He pulled his knees up and circled them with his arms, his head in between. The water began to rise up around his shorts. From the downstairs he could hear his wife. "For God's sake—what's this on the stairs?" □

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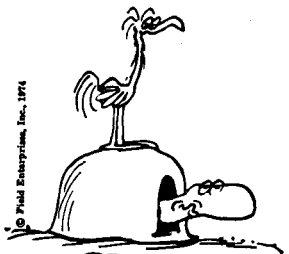

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Lawrence Sturhahn

LOCATION

A tree is a tree, a rock is a rock;
shoot it in Griffith Park!

East of the old Warner Brothers Studio are the Hollywood Hills, and east of that is Griffith Park which has as its eastern boundary the Golden State Freeway. With Burbank to the north, Glendale east, and Hollywood west, with Mt. Hollywood (El. 1652) approximately its center, the park is more or less in a center not far from where many of the studios were (and are), and the only greensward around.

With the irony of this town, where irony is a long suit, the park is not named for David Wark Griffith, who was one of the late founders and early innovators of the American Cinema. A brilliantly creative man, he *may very well* have been the one to utter the homily attributed to him, and what it means is that a tree in one place *looks* much like a tree in another (likewise for rocks) so instead of going to Timbuktu to shoot (which will cost a lot of plane fares and per diems), get a bus and box lunches and go to Griffith Park. It shouldn't cost so much.

Of course, in *the business*, not costing so much eventually gets to be too much, so why not build your Griffith Park, or Sioux City and Tombstone, too, adjacent to the stages on the back lots? Years ago, taken on a tour of the MGM lot in Culver City—which even then had an oil well pumping in its center—I looked at several blocks of city streets where all the buildings, bank or brownstone, were cut off at the third or fourth story, with cables rigged across the top from one side of the street to the other. When I asked I was told that once they rigged canvas on the cables to block out the sun. Then, using lights underneath, the film makers could create whatever effect they wanted—day or night, sun or storm.

In the years in between that first trip and now I have worked on films on many locations, walked around on many of the back lots, seen everything from candy stores to Camelot, from the OK Corral to Xanadu. If, in the beginning, it was either studio or location, that turned into the creation of enormous lot complexes where anything was constructed, from a burning bush to the Red Sea.

During the '30s and '40s most films were made on the lots in Hollywood. After World War II came television, which started "live" in New York, and—like the movie industry had before it—eventually moved to Hollywood, and to film. Theatrical movies, in search of social aesthetic realism, went on location not only off the lots; outside Los Angeles altogether, they began to go to Timbuktu.

* * *

Recently, on the occasion of doing background on the production of the television series, "The Streets of San Francisco," picking up a little atmosphere (and then nostalgia) preliminary to an interview with the production manager, I spent a day following the unit from location to location. In an industry where the numbers with dollar signs are one definition of success or failure (and might be the most important numbers of all), a television production takes risk, shooting on location, interiors and exteriors both, for everything outside the office of its policeman principal. Supposed to be in the Hall of Justice on Bryant Street, it's actually a set in QM Productions' studio on Kearny Street.

On the television branch of the motion picture business tree, a sixty minute show (actually forty-eight minutes of film) must be finished with photography in an absolute number of days—in this instance: six. Therefore, there's security in a studio where conditions are absolutely (hopefully) controllable. And scarey is what location shooting is, subject to a hundred whims, mechanical,

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chemical, human, or climatic; in spite of the similarity of trees and rocks, everything is only under the most tenuous control. Once, in Canada in December, after three days of preparation with the temperature in the middle teens and twenties above zero, on the first day of production the temperature was in the same range, only it was below zero. In the six vehicles that were to carry the cast, crew, and equipment to location, the oil in the engine blocks had congealed to glue and nary a piston would move nor a crankshaft turn. The Husky imported from Hollywood whimpered in the back corner of his cage; he was damned if he was coming out to walk around on that icy stuff. Shooting was held up half that day, and the dog was written out of the script. That night the camera was stripped down, every part dried in lighter fluid. After being reassembled, for the balance of the shooting, it was never brought into a heated building, where condensation could build up to freeze it when it went outside. Sounding like a coffee grinder, it ran.

In San Francisco the temperature ranges between forty and eighty, or such is the boast. If it was near one hundred for a week last summer, and snowed last winter, who has not noticed the strangeness of our weather? Murphy's Law is more immutable, and that's the law in film. It means that if something can go wrong it very well might, and, in the movie business, that translates into money.

In the old days of fifteen years ago a feature shooting four to five minutes of film a day was fast—one or two pages was slow. And, on features, there is "going over schedule," which, in fact, is quite usual. On "The Streets of San Francisco" between nine and eleven minutes of film must get done each shooting day. That's not unusual for a television series, so if you get behind it's a matter of hours added to days, not days added to the six day week—there is no such thing as over schedule. Most of the time, with most of the show shot on location, it's approximately sixty people, cast and crew, working for six months, twelve to fourteen hours a day, six days a week, that have to be schlepped from one location to the next. "Sometimes," the production manager said, "the choice of location is dictated by finding places to park."

For "The Streets of San Francisco" unit consists of twenty vehicles, more or less, the most distinctive of them a Cinemobile, long and streamlined, in the shape of a sleek, windowless, low-slung bus. Its interior, compartmentalized, carries two thousand feet of cable, forty-four assorted lamps from "Inky" up to carbon arc. And there are two more of them also, mounted on the roof, capable of being raised thirty feet above the street. The Cinemobile carries the Panaflex camera, all its accessories, and a thousand amp generator to power the lights.

The truck that has the toilets is called "The Honey Wagon." A tractor-trailer rig, it's high and boxy, and along the one side are a series of doors that open into tiny narrow offices for the assistant directors and script supervisor, or dressing rooms for the actors other than the two stars, Karl Malden and Richard Hatch, each of whom has his own motor home.

There are three "black & whites," police model sedans, painted in police colors, that belong to QM Productions and not the city. There are seven assorted vans, pick-ups, station wagons (one of them painted black and white too), a five ton bob-tail for

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carrying props, another truck for the grip equipment: dolleys, platforms, set-pieces, sandbags, apple-boxes, plywood, and lumber.

In the lunch truck body is a complete kitchen (sinks, refrigerator, stove). Outside, when the unit breaks to eat—which, by union regulations, can't be any longer than five hours after the first call—the cast and crew line up. That day the selection offered was corned beef and cabbage, boiled potatoes, or pot roast, or ham with rice, or noodles and zucchini, or string beans (French-cut). Very tasty.

Outside, on long folding tables (with attendant folding chairs) set up under the trees, the cast and crew eat. Having stood in the chow line to the truck, they then pass by a table on which are displayed the accessories to the main dishes: a fruit—or lettuce and tomato—or Jello salad, bread and rolls, and butter, bottles of catsup, chili sauce, mustard, salt and pepper in the paper envelopes (like you get on airplanes), bowls of pickles and relish and mayonnaise and Russian dressing, pans of sweet cakes with chocolate or strawberry icing, apples, peaches, oranges. And the choice of drinks is coffee, milk, chocolate milk, tea, lemonade, cold sodas. On that location in December in frozen Canada, I remember, the hot soup would sometimes turn to ice before it could be drunk.

* * *

There was a feature picture shot on the north shore of Long Island fifteen odd years ago. For two months the location was an old magnificent estate with woods and a lake, the main house standing in for a sanitarium—a buggy bin—the coach house for production office, the pool house for the director. Garages and greenhouses were sets for the patient's occupational therapy, or carpenter and prop shops, a stable for the horse that had one scene. Patients (extra players) played croquet on the lawn that swept down to the lake on the other side of which were the woods and then the post and rail fence that marked the property line.

The estate, belonging to a prominent and wealthy family, was vacant and up for sale, so the production hired it to shoot the picture; it was a microcosm of the studio/lot, complete with exteriors and interiors both. At the back side, by the service entrance, there was a big parking lot and, set up next to it, an enormous striped green and white tent that, on the north shore, are erected for coming-out parties and formal weddings.

To that parking lot each day a bus came from New York to bring out the extra players, the bit players, the patients and attendants of the sanitarium who were background for the principal actors. In that tent they spent the day, waiting to be called to the set for a particular scene. A gourmet north shore caterer set up for between seventy and a hundred-fifty for lunch every day. Some of the crew said the food was too fancy and drove off the grounds to the nearest bar to have a shot or a beer (or three) with a hamburger on the side. Tending to be very poor and often hungry (it's not the choicest life in the business), the extra players took advantage of the platters of shrimp, chicken, sliced rare roast beef, the soft rolls and sweet butter, and all the rest. They left the tables decimated. At lunch time, too, one of the assistant directors would take the pretty stand-in for the star off horseback riding in the woods on the other side of the lake.

Most of the actors on the picture, star, principal, and extra alike, were supposed to be crazy, and the doctors and aides and occupational therapists had a few problems too. Shot on a location standing in for a sanitarium, in a picture with a lot of internal tension, after a while everybody was crazy, and maybe that made for a better picture.

After it was over, at the "wrap" party, one of the stars tried to get a group together to take the other star down to the lake and "depants" him. A well known writer from New York

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broke down the door of another star's dressing room in the big house (which the film company paid to have repaired) because he wanted to get at the lady he thought the make-up man had in there. When a production assistant questioned the propriety of the act he got a broken jaw from the macho writer's fist.

* * *

It's been almost ten years—with one brief traumatic interlude in between—since I have been with a crew that was shooting a movie, so this visit to "The Streets of San Francisco" was all nostalgia to me. Driving up the street to the first location in a police station I saw all the twenty vehicles and felt the past come back on me.

On a picture in Greenwich Village once, there was a hole-in-the-wall lunch counter that dispensed hot dogs, Italian sausage sandwiches, cold sodas, and when the movie crew set up to shoot along the street, the canny proprietor (who had previously made a deal) came out to complain he wasn't getting enough. He hadn't known they were going to block the street. He hadn't figured nobody was going to be using his place. He wasn't getting....For an hour he stopped the shooting, holding out for his price—getting it.

The other side of that: on another picture shooting locations from Hollywood, a whole street was needed for a sequence of scenes. And this is not easy to find. To avert control problems like the Greenwich Village hold-up multiplied twenty times, this picture decided to rent a street that was being demolished to make way for what is now the Lincoln Center complex off Broadway on the lower-upper West Side.

The condemned buildings, tenements, and small stores interspersed with some brownstones had stood empty and subject to vandals and squatters then for several years. And though this was over fifteen years ago, and the socio-psycho-economic conditions of that city were nowhere near as intense as they are today, that street, empty of people, had the air of having been under seige. There was hardly a window not broken. Battered doors, scrap lumber, torn newspapers, garbage and trash littered its length. Deciding that the security of having total control was balanced by what it would cost to make the street look real again, the movie company opted to replace the window glass up to the third floor, put awnings back on the store fronts and dress their windows. After all that was done the company settled on the location to shoot. Enterprising members of the crew, seeing a use of these empty rooms with new glass, invited hookers to settle in too.

In San Francisco, a month or more ago, the second location (which the unit was late in getting to) was at Stowe Lake in Golden Gate Park. I have never been to Griffith Park, but I have spent a lot of time in Central Park in New York. I know other parks in other cities—like Wichita or Paris—too. But all are hard put compared to Golden Gate, which on halcyon Northern California days, is always full of people, tourists and San Franciscans both.

It was one of those days as the stream of vehicles pulled in, and the obviously exotic (there's some characteristic to movie crews, arrogant perhaps, quite slick and handsome, but weathered) people disembarked to stand around waiting for the Cinemobile. And real people began to gather around—as they always do. And as someone always says, having seen three takes on this set-up and five on that, "why do they keep *doing it* over and over? And look at everybody just standing around—my gracious! What an easy job."

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(signature) **Robley Wilson, Jr., Editor**

The sequence at the lake included the shot when Arnold Schwarzenegger ("Mr. Universe" turned actor in Rafelson's "Stay Hungry," and now reaping the rewards of being *hot*), cast in this episode as a weightlifting murderer, running in warm-up with stripes, meets the girl (Hilary Thompson), also running, whom he eventually kills. To be done as a long dolly shot, the camera and one arc, mounted on an electric cart, were to move ahead of them as they ran along the lake-side path. Because the arc had to be powered (something in the neighborhood of 160 amps) the cable had to reach the generator in the Cinemobile parked down the hill on the road. Also the cable had to reach the whole length of dolly run—close to one hundred and fifty yards. And the cable—what they call 2.0, which is not as heavy as 4.0, but is still heavy enough—just won't drag. And it would end up in the camera's view even if it would. That meant that every two or three feet along the length of the run a crew man has to hold a length of it, be ready to "follow it" running backwards behind the dolly.

The making of the shot will be a strange parade, the electric cart, with crew hanging from every hand hold, the smoking arc, the line of men running backward ahead of all this, holding cable. And for all of that, in the Panaflex camera's view, Arnold and the lady are jogging easily. They rehearsed it twice and shot it three times, and the crew joked to each other about the days when all of them were grunts in the business, when what they did was pull cable and sweep sets. Watching were the hangers-on, the people who watch through all the takes, and nudge each other asking who is that? Is he Rock Hudson, or what?

Movie companies that go on distant location for a long time tend to take on collective characteristics. On one picture that was gone for two months in the south everybody with wife at home got a girl friend. There was a social director who arranged parties, catered the food and liquor, hired the hall, for Saturday nights. After a while, with all the bickering going on between the couples, it was like being married with wives all over again.

In New York State, on another film, they installed the hookers in the prop trucks. Then one day a bus load of Vassar girls came from Poughkeepsie to observe a movie being made. It was a Saturday morning, after a heavy week of mostly night shooting (that picture had a lot of Night in it—which is always harder). The sky was gray and a strong cold wind blew off the Hudson. The scene had something to do with a car and involved few of the crew so a lot of us were standing along the edge of this two-lane road, shivering and telling movie jokes. Like movie stories, they are arcane, having to do with the intricacy and fragility and sometimes intractability of the equipment, and the personae of themselves, the crew. Suddenly, on this cold grey winter day, down toward us came a Greyhound bus. And out the windows—as it passed—eagerly stared all these bright pretty clean Ivy League faces. "My—oh my...," the make-up man said reverently, "will you look at all those candy-mountains!"

There was a picture that shot three weeks of night schedule in New York City—that's from six or seven in the evening until two or three or four in the morning with the meal break at midnight, five hours after the first call—and this was February, which is butt frigid arid end of New York winter. Old ice in the gutters is black with soot, and the stones take on bone grey; you breathe in grit, and it seems as though in hell spring will never come. One sequence in that picture—a fantasy of a child of eight or ten—took place in a playground in the park that runs along the river by the side of the Henry Hudson Parkway. The temperature that night was eighteen degrees, there was snow on the ground, and a freezing wind from the Hudson. If you walked thirty feet away from the circle of park the lights illuminated—a dream with a delicate blond child swinging, crooning a small child song—down along the esplanade by the frozen river's edge, in dim lights from stanchions, on the concrete you saw the scurrying of dark shapes: enormous rats with obscene hairless tails.

Recently, reading Borges, I came across this part of the epilogue to *Dreamtigers*:

> *A man sets himself the task of portraying the world. Through the years he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, instruments, stars, horses, and people. Shortly before his death he discovers that that patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his face.* □

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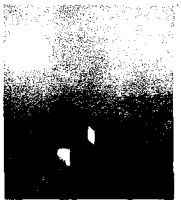

Loree Rackstraw

Paradise Re-Lost

Slapstick, or Lonesome No More!, by Kurt Vonnegut, Delacorte, $7.95

Kurt Vonnegut continues his crusade for human dignity and decency in this complex new novel which, he says, is the closest he will ever come to writing an autobiography. One major theme of *Slapstick* is the social malaise of rootlessness and loneliness that stems from the breakdown of tradition and of the family in America. Another, a new one for him, is the abuse of children who are deemed abnormal or retarded.

A third theme which dominates the first half of the book, and is complicated enough apparently to have eluded most of his critics, is that of the duality of consciousness as developed through the novel's two main characters, Wilbur and Eliza Swain, who are "dizygotic" (fraternal) twins. While this theme may lack the romantic or evangelical appeal of some of his more popular anti-war and anti-institution crusades, it is an archetype central to his re-statement of the myth of the Fall from Innocence in an idiom of the 21st century. It seems ironic that his critics castigate him for "saying nothing new" about tired social themes, but ignore his masterful art of myth-making. Certainly Vonnegut's novel gives us a new perspective on the schizophrenic character of human consciousness, although the existential dilemma of free will and the classical split between the Dionysian and Apollonian consciousness appear in all his books.

The disappointed devotees who call this a ho-hum book may be those disenchanted folks who court nihilism and cataclysm for the sake of a "meaningful" revolution. What is missing from their fervor is Vonnegut's consistent centering on unselfconscious compassion and the complex suffering that results from that commitment. The flower children of the sixties could stick a daisy in the barrel of a cop's rifle and walk away feeling righteous. Vonnegut's characters don't walk away, and they never feel righteous. Thus, when he says in the Prologue that the novel is modeled after the slapstick film comedies of Laurel and Hardy, the reader had best note his definition: "The fundamental joke with Laurel and Hardy, it seems to me, was that they did their best with every test." The humor of Vonnegut is born of compassion, not of cynicism. The joke is *fundamental*, not surface: Laurel and Hardy "never failed to bargain in good faith with their destinies..." Corny? Of course. Decent? Absolutely. Vonnegut has long claimed that he speaks out of middle class middle America. His book, he says, is "about what life *feels* like to me." (Emphasis his.) His book, *I* say, is a demonstration of the difference between art and the cop-out of self-indulgence.

The Prologue tells us, then, that the novel was conceived during his daydream on the way to his uncle's funeral accompanied by his only living relative, his brother Bernard. The seat on the airliner between them is empty, symbolic of his dead sister. The story which follows is the autobiography of a one hundred year old man, Vonnegut's experimentation with old age. (Vonnegut will be one hundred in the year 2022.) The old man is Dr. Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain who lives in the ruins of Manhattan (Skyscraper National Park). Through flashback we learn that he was born a monster, the twin of Eliza Mellon Swain (also a monster) with whom he was confined by his wealthy parents to a refurbished family mansion in the middle of an orchard in Galen, Vermont. Believed to be idiots, the two behave as they are expected to, but secretly they discover that when they put their heads together, they become one genius. Eliza has the consciousness of the right hemisphere of the brain, the Dionysian, intuitive, juxtaposing aspect; Wilbur's consciousness is Apollonian with its linear, logical, language function. Together they are able to read all the books in their dead grandfather's library, secreted away in their "alternate universe," his mausoleum which they discover through a labyrinthian maze. And together they discover interesting insights about their planet: an argument with Darwin's Theory of Evolution; the secret of the construction of Stonehenge and the Pyramids (variable gravity); and "a utopian scheme for creating artificial extended families in America by issuing everyone a new middle name. All persons with the same middle name would be relatives."

Wilbur and Eliza's happy life as one genius comes to an end when they reveal their intelligence to their parents and are separated because of their orgiastic effort to demonstrate their collective perfection on an intelligence test. The evening before they are banished from Galen (Eden?) they listen to the cry of a whippoorwill (certainly a foreshadowing of Wilbur's plight and the existential dilemma) and they hide the secrets of the universe they have written in a funereal urn in their grandfather's mausoleum. One must note with delight Vonnegut's play with the name Galen: Claudius Galen was a second century Greek writer (artist) and physician (scientist), nicely paralleling the dual consciousness of Eliza and Wilbur. Galen also observed the similarity between apes and man.

Eliza is sent to an institution and Wilbur eventually muddles his way through Harvard Medical School, becomes a pediatrician, and establishes a children's hospital at the family estate in Galen. Meanwhile, Eliza has been sprung by an old Vonnegut character now somewhat mellowed, the lawyer Norman Mushari (Vonnegut *will* insist on

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continuity with the past!), and has returned to claim her birthright. She is a mess: among other bizarre shenanigans she purchases the New England Patriots football team. She encounters Wilbur in Boston; another orgy occurs during which a child-rearing book titled "The Cry of the Nocturnal Goatsucker" (another name for whippoorwill) is written by the genius pair; and Eliza retreats to the ancient Inca capital of Machu Picchu in Peru, an international haven for rich people fleeing social reforms and economic declines.

Wilbur later becomes a senator and finally the last President of the United States, a country virtually paralyzed by plague, pollution and lack of fuel. Before he leaves Galen for Washington, Wilbur is visited by an official from China, the only "interesting" country in the world. The official, Fu Manchu, has been sent by Eliza to investigate the interesting secrets discovered and hidden away by the genius twins as children. Fu Manchu is interesting because he is the size of Wilbur's thumb (the Chinese have reduced their size so they don't need so much clothing and food). Eliza's adult reward for their essay on variable gravity is a trip to the Chinese colony on Mars. Wilbur learns of her arrival and her death in an avalanche of fool's gold on his fiftieth birthday, the day gravity becomes heavy and destroys American edifices everywhere. He is later elected president and goes to Washington, armed with his abundant supply of a new anti-depressant drug on which he is constantly stoned and with his Utopian vision of extended families which will end loneliness in America. His campaign slogan is "Lonesome No More," the sub-title of Vonnegut's novel.

As President, he accomplishes the Utopia by burning the Nixon Administration papers to make enough electricity to run the computers which assign new middle names for everyone. The extended families have the effect of reducing the amount of suffering caused by civil wars in a decaying country reminiscent of the Middle Ages.

Wilbur, whose middle name has been changed from Rockefeller to Daffodil-11, makes one trip after people lose interest in his presidency, a trip to Urbana, Illinois, via the Kingdom of Michigan, to talk to his dead sister by means of a now defunct nuclear accelerator. The message she gives him from the "Turkey Farm" is that heaven is utterly boring and that the plague in America is caused by inhaling microscopic Chinese communists. During a minor orgy stemming from Wilbur's withdrawal from his happy pills, he unknowingly fathers a son and leaves for Manhattan, the Island of Death, so he can join his sister and make afterlife more interesting. However, he is given the antidote to The Green Death and takes up residency in the ruins of the Empire State Building. There he lives out the medieval idyl of his life with the few remaining survivors and celebrates his 101st birthday given for him by his neighbor, Vera Chimpmunk-5 Zappa, and his granddaughter, Melody, who has been rowed across the Harlem River by a friendly relative at the risk of his own life. Charon need not be named for us to understand Vonnegut's play on another myth.

* * *

As an autobiography, the book is a masterwork of imagination. It is a tender tribute to the memory of his sister, Alice, who died of cancer at age 41 and whose loss as Vonnegut's "audience of one" is deeply felt. He notes in the Prologue, "...she was the person I had always written for. She was the secret of whatever artistic unity I had ever achieved." In the novel, when Wilbur and Eliza are separated they become dull Bobby and Betty Brown with a state of mind Vonnegut has complained of frequently. And while the combination of harmonious minds make the Chinese successful, it can also result in the antithesis of art and success—products like the atomic bomb—when scientists put their heads together. Vonnegut here reminds us of the benevolent creativity that *can* emerge politically or artistically from intelligence.

* * *

As a novel, *Slapstick* is a play of ideas and form that delight, amuse, and move the reader. The coherency effected by contrasting images of animals and plants *vis à vis* railroads and bridges (his sister's husband died in a railroad bridge accident) reflect Vonnegut's (Wilbur's) view of what human beings were meant to be: "...innocent great apes, with limited means for doing mischief." When they were one genius, Wilbur and Eliza's argument against Darwin's Theory of Evolution was that "creatures would become terribly vulnerable while attempting to improve themselves." It is that terrible vulnerability which Vonnegut now transposes from Eden to Skyscraper National Park or the Island of Death. And it is there, on the eve of his 101st birthday with an erection caused by light gravity, that Wilbur realizes: "All the damaging excesses of Americans in the past were motivated by loneliness rather than a fondness for sin." With generous grace and wit Vonnegut transforms suffering when Wilbur says, "Life, ideally, I think, should be like the Minuet or the Virginia Reel or the Turkey Trot, something easily mastered in a dancing school." *Slapstick* is testimony to the fact that Vonnegut did not master his dance of art and life easily. His response to inevitable absurdity is a celebratory "Hi ho" rather than the more cynical "So it goes" of previous novels, but the reader knows his celebration does not stem from innocence.

All is not well in our little garden, but *Slapstick* leaves us with the fond notion that maybe the Fall was worth it after all. —*Loree Rackstraw*

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Edited and with a foreword by Gordon Lish

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